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# JOHN WILLIAM FLETCHER
# CLAIRVOYANT

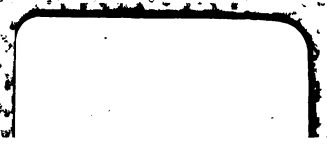


SUSAN E. GAY.

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*"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."*

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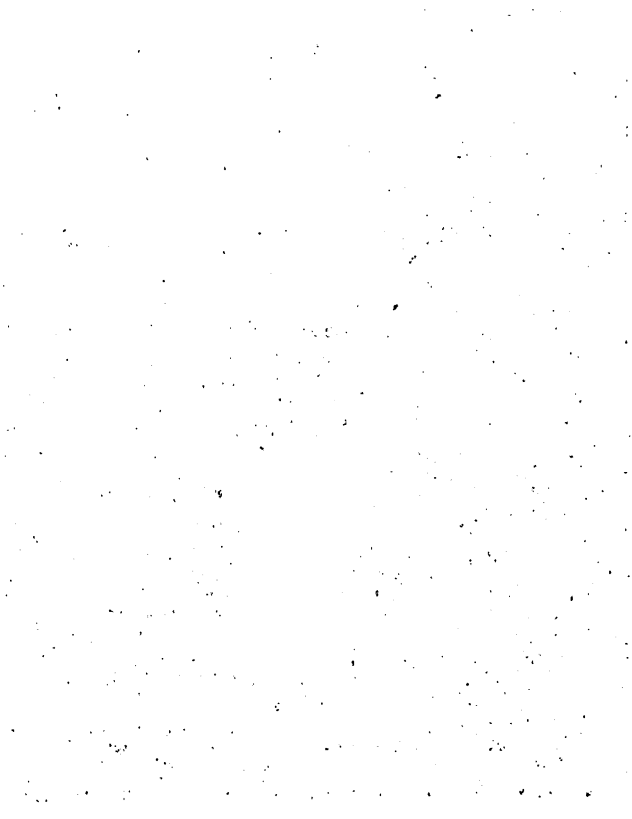
JOHN WILLIAM FLETCHER

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# JOHN WILLIAM FLETCHER,

## Clairvoyant.

A

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH,

WITH SOME CHAPTERS ON THE PRESENT ERA AND RELIGIOUS REFORM.

BY

SUSAN E. GAY.

Not License, but Liberty: not Revolution, but Reform.

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There is no death! The dust we tread
Shall change beneath the summer showers
To golden grain or mellow fruit,
Or rainbow-tinted flowers.

The granite rocks disorganise
To feed the hungry moss they bear;
The fairest leaves drink daily life
From out the viewless air.

There is no death! The leaves may fall,
The flowers may fade and pass away;
They only wait through wintry hours
The coming of the May.

And ever near us, though unseen,
The dear immortal spirits tread;
For all the boundless universe
Is life; there are no dead!

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# PREFACE.

The following pages are written in utter indifference to all critics and reviewers, for the earnest man or woman who loves truth.

They contain a brief outline of the history of a man who stands forth to-day, amid the scepticism, the worldliness, the thousand distractions of a century which is with pain and disruption ushering in a new era, not as one of its inventors, not as one of its fearless physicists, not as one of its gifted in art and song,—but as a Seer, and a Teacher of something to which men are very blind.

Victor Hugo has said, and said truly, that the next century will be "the century of seers;" but the one born before his time occupies at this hour a lonely height. His psychic faculties developed to their full extent—his physical nature subordinated to the spiritual, he appears as a representative of the abnormal, rather than the ideal man; his powers excite curiosity, interest, suspicion, ridicule, even hatred; but they rarely

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bring complete conviction as to the living fact of an unseen world. Anything is believed in, in these days, rather than that sacred reality before which our physical life becomes an ever-changing world of shadows, taking only countless forms, which appear, and alter, and pass away according to the law which decrees that Matter shall be but a temporary expression of—*what?* The Eternal Spirit; which the materialist, for want of a better and higher word, calls—Force.

And when our seer, who wearily spends life, health, energy, and time in the interests of those with whom his very nature has nothing in common,—claims the fee without which he cannot live, and which is given to the physician, the lawyer, and the clergyman with gratitude and love—the climax of his sins against society is reached, and the term "*professional*" is used against him as it is used against no other man. Where, however, are the men who will give their teacher a home and a subsistence, and bid him render up his testimony to all in freedom, as the true spiritualist must ever desire? They are nowhere to be found, and the man who has been blessed with the most

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divine gifts that God can give to His creatures here below, must face an ordeal and fight a battle before which the strongest spirit might well fail.

In England there is no real liberty; we are chained hand and foot to old customs, old habits of thought, old laws, old theologies; it is the stronghold of conservatism; and the destiny of the reformer is as likely to be the felon's dock in this age as in the time of Mary, who added to it the brief, and perhaps, considering the difference of organisation between that day and ours, hardly more terrible suffering of the faggot and the stake. Should it be my destiny to bear witness to the truth whose light is now hungered for by the very minds which reject it, and should English ignorance and English bigotry be employed to crush the fairest and most noble work which has ever been accomplished in our sin-stained metropolis, I can only say that as it is a pleasure to me to write these pages, so also would it be a pride—I may say indeed the proudest hour of my life—to bear testimony to it, and to stand even in a London police-court beside John William Fletcher—him of whom I boldly

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say, that did men but know the truth, they would cheer him in the street!

Him, too, who has, I believe in my inmost heart, received a mission from the Master, to comfort the broken-hearted, to strengthen the suffering, to heal the sick. Some there are who can with me, testify to this, and who with me would also say of one who is the Hampden of religious liberty in our land—

" Thou art a prism who dividest light
Into its various colours. Thou hast seen
The vision of the Holy One and been
Transfigured on the lonely mountain height.
One such as thou would, in the semi-night
Of Israel's noon, have risen and stood between
God and His people as a seer serene
In humble consciousness of inward might.
Thou might'st have sat with Jerome in his cave;
The church of old had gladly called thee sire;
If Christ had seen thee drag the Syrian wave,
He would, I ween, have pledged thee heavenly hire,
Bid thee the scribe and sophist teach and save,
A Gospel write, and on a cross expire!"

S. E. G.

*Falmouth, April,* 1880.

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# SECOND PREFACE.

The little volume which is now presented to English readers, was completely written as far as page 273, in the summer of 1880, a fact which can be proved by several witnesses, and but for an apparently insignificant event, would undoubtedly have been prematurely published.

Since then, the remarkable series of prophecies recorded in the second chapter, and to which allusion was made in an article in *Life* of October 4th, 1879, have been almost entirely, and as literally as possible, fulfilled, and save for a few insignificant revisions of an historical or argumentative nature, the work, including the preface, has been left absolutely untouched. Not a line relating in the remotest degree to anything of a prophetic character has been altered.

The closing chapters were written this year and I earnestly trust that they will in some degree contribute to a realisation of the object of the singular events which have covered the name of

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Fletcher for a time with the most undeserved opprobrium, particularly when studied in connection with the facts about to be made known with regard to the "trial" of 1881. Read in the light of prophecy, known long ago, and in many countries, they become simply an extraordinary design, carried out, as in the past, through the cruelty of one human being and the heroism of another. And as before, the fight has been one in behalf of liberty, of truth, of a higher form of religion, of the demonstration of immortality, in which selected instruments have been called forth to accomplish, at the price of great suffering and sacrifice, a necessary work for the instruction and welfare of others. Our acknowledgments are due to Dr. T. L. Nichols, of London, for the unflinching determination with which he made known the evidence of Mr. Francis Morton and others, who had done their utmost in the cause of justice, and in vain.

In William Fletcher a man may be recognised whose exceptional gifts might have attracted the attention of the scientific world, had their possessor bowed to the prejudice of the moment, styled

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himself a "thought-reader," and repudiated his position as an agent—a MEDIUM—of spirits. That he never did this for one single hour, in sunshine or in shadow, that he everywhere and at all times avowed himself a medium, a spiritualist, and a reformer, is the reason of all others which moves me to make known so far as I can, his life, his purposes, and his inalienable belief.

To avoid all misconception with regard to this object, I may state that at no time have I ever had any professional connection with either literature, or the great and honourable work of spiritualism.

I will only add that, in perfect sympathy with his love of reform, and earnest desire to spread a clearer knowledge of the nature of man as the possessor of a spiritual life which survives physical dissolution, I considered it a duty, even before he himself had recognised its necessity, to publish of my own wish and will, all I had written and realised on the first available opportunity, and without any other aid, direction, or sympathy than I have received from spiritual sources.

S. E. G.

*October*, 1882.

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# JOHN WILLIAM FLETCHER,

## CLAIRVOYANT.

### CHAPTER I.

#### EARLY LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIUMSHIP.

JOHN WILLIAM FLETCHER was born some forty miles from Boston, at Westford, in the United States, in the year 1852.

He held the position, and received the education, of an ordinary middle-class American citizen, and the means which his father had realised from a manufacturing business in Lowell gave to his only son the prospect of a life full of ease, comfort, and many worldly advantages.

The painful circumstances which severed him from all this, and which estranged him from those who were for a long period very dear to his heart, prevent me from dwelling upon the details of his early life, with which those friends were associated. The estrangement accomplished one designed event; it sent him into the world to work in the noblest cause which has ever been committed to the keeping of man. The life of ease was exchanged for the life which of all others is a daily sacrifice to a sensitive nature,—the sacrifice of encountering ridicule and contempt in giving up one's whole being for the sake of demonstrating to blind humanity the sublime truth of its immortality, and the reality of the eternal world. What *money* can ever compensate the suffering spirit,



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pure and gentle and strong, of the subject of these pages for the cross he has had to bear? What external advantage, or comfort, or luxury can ever make a home on earth for one who has received the Christ-spirit, and who is "not of this world"? The faithful medium between the things which are seen and those that are unseen has a Gethsemane to enter, a blind mob to take him captive,—and worse still, a Judas among his own to betray his cause. The persecutions which have been permitted, no doubt in wisdom, to drag the holy cause of Spiritualism for a while in the dust, and which have been incited by those evil ones,—*spirits*, alas!—who hate the truth even more than a Lankester or a Tyndall can do, and who would stand between it and mankind,—have been the most bitter cup to those faithful few who have sought to uphold that which is the life and light of the future, and to practise, so far as they were able to do, the beautiful teachings of which they are the chosen messengers. Nothing but the imperious command of the spirit-world, which is answering the cry of countless human souls for *light*, could call forth any man to such a work; nothing but the deepest sense of duty could hold him to it. That the sacrifice has not, however, been made in vain, it is the object of the evidence contained in the ensuing pages to show.

William Fletcher was born a medium. His mother possessed the gift of second sight. His very lessons at school were accomplished by spirit influence, sometimes hardly so much to his advantage as might have been thought, as his astonished tutors declared they were being made the subjects of practical jokes, which they strongly

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resented. He would recite a paper presented to him in a vision, instead of the appointed task, and it was some time before the fact was found out and admitted. One of the earliest proofs of his peculiar power, which has been lately recorded in a popular journal, was given by his describing through a clairvoyant vision the scene of a fire which had taken place some eight miles distant from his home, and which a servant reported seemed to be in the direction of a factory which belonged to his father. William declared at once that he saw it all, and that the building on fire was one situated next to it, a statement which was speedily verified by his father, who rode off at once to the spot, and found it to be literally true.

The story of his introduction to the subject of modern spiritualism, as it is called, is very simple. It was discussed at the school where he was educated, and William Fletcher learned for the first time that such a thing existed. Shortly afterwards a gentleman paid a visit to his family, who again spoke of it, and whose personal experience and keen intuition enabled him at once to declare that the boy was a great medium. He laughed at the idea. His friend, however, induced him to write a letter which was carefully sealed, and to send it to the public séance-room at the offices of the *Banner of Light* in Boston, where answers were given to concealed questions. It was done. Mrs. Conant, who was at that time the officiating medium, quickly ran over the letters placed before her, and stopped at this one. The envelope was blank except for a small cross. It contained a communication addressed to one who had been William's tutor for several years, and who had told him he would always be near his favourite pupil in spirit at the



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time of his death, and as the latter took no interest in anyone else in the spirit-world, he remembered the promise, and selected his teacher as the only person with whom, if it were possible, he cared to communicate. The medium immediately wrote on the envelope a message, not a little to his surprise, to the effect that William was one of the greatest mediums in the world, and that his work would begin at once. It came from the spirit to whom the inquiry was addressed. Our young medium returned home, and no sooner had he done so than the prophecy was verified. He sat down and wrote an essay in trance which was widely read, and excited great comment. The consciousness of the power seemed to be the only condition necessary for its higher development, and from this time he began to be influenced in an extraordinary way, being constantly thrown into trances, during which he invariably discoursed about spirits, and gave what are called proofs of identity in those who communicated through him, which excited astonishment among his friends. His family then began to hold a circle every night, and William's father, who became enthusiastic about the subject, engaged Mrs. Forster, the mother of the well-known Charles Forster, to give professional séances at their house, to which all who were interested were invited. They were not without that element of the ludicrous which has attached itself throughout the history of the world to what is most touching and sublime. One evening after they had been sitting together for a considerable time, an aged woman, the only so-called spiritualist in the place, suddenly rose amid a solemn silence which had been unbroken, and said in a husky voice and quavering tones, "I for one, should

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**HOME AT WESTFORD.**

*(Fac-simile of a pen-and-ink sketch taken in 1882.)*

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like to know if there are any of *my* folks here," and then sat down. Another long pause ensued. She then rose again, and to the great amusement of all present, said to the medium, "Will you please go through the death-scene of my brother Robert? He was *drownded* and it will be a *great test!*"

The only incident of any importance that occurred during these little gatherings was the repetition of the statement that William was a great medium. He had always been delicate, and as he possessed at this time very indifferent health, he was advised to go to the backwoods of Maine for change of air. On the first night of his arrival at the little country village where he had been sent, he held a séance. It was a very extraordinary one. This was repeated every night, and all the country people came to attend these little circles for miles around. He was often asked, while walking in the street, to come in and tell some anxious inquirer "about the dead people," and such satisfactory tidings were generally given about them that interest and curiosity rapidly increased. Among others who were drawn around him, was Mr. George Worcester, the son of a celebrated Swedenborgian clergyman, who used to join the circle, and was the only one present who possessed any insight into the nature of a gift which excited little more than curiosity and wonder in others, but which interested him for its own sake. He suggested to the spirits controlling the boy that they should give lectures at the school-house, and they consented to the proposal. The first intimation he had of the scheme was while walking in the village, when he saw a card in the window of a store, stating, much to his

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surprise, that "Willie Fletcher would lecture at the school-house on Sunday morning and afternoon." When the day came, however, he went, or rather, was *taken*, for on the appointed morning, instead of awaking as usual, he was thrown into a trance, carefully dressed by the controlling spirits, and led to the school-house, where some thirty persons were assembled in a little, unpretending low-roofed building, in which the village children learnt their alphabet. It was a motley group. Dresses of all kinds and colours prevailed, and the little assemblage inaugurated the service conducted by spirit-influence by upraising the strains of good old Dr. Watts' hymn, commencing—

"Hark from the tombs a doleful sound";

which, strange to relate, was considered an eminently appropriate one for the occasion. The subject of the discourse was then selected by the audience, which was more fortunate in its themes than in its songs, the choice falling upon the beautiful verse—"In my Father's house are many mansions." On this the young trance-speaker delivered a lecture which lasted an hour, and was attentively listened to, and he only became aware of what he had done at its close, when he was speedily aroused from his unconscious condition. That this long sermon was appreciated is proved by the fact that the congregation decided, without a single exception, to wait for the next service, when a fresh theme was chosen with similar good results, and William Fletcher descended from the little platform feeling that he had accomplished something, he hardly knew what, and with his heart full of a longing for some little token of appreciation and

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sympathy, he accosted a motherly-looking old lady, and asked her "how she liked it." She candidly replied that "she didn't know anything about it"; but by way of shewing her gratitude for sitting through two discourses, she put her hand in her pocket, and pulled out a *Boston cracker*, which she handed to the youthful preacher. So sensitive was his nature even then to the kindness and love of those with whom he came in contact, that he has often said since that his heart was more touched by that quaint token of sympathy in the little village school-house, than by the diamonds presented to him in after years.

Shortly after this he gave a second lecture in trance, which lasted about an hour and a half, and which was preceded by the singing of a psalm, hardly less inappropriate than the celebrated ditty of Dr. Watts, viz. :—

"My days are as the grass."

The subject was again chosen by the audience, which was also once more as felicitous in its texts as it was unhappy in its hymns,—the grand prophetic passage being selected—"Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

From this time, about the year 1869, William, although barely seventeen, instantly sprang into notoriety, and received invitations to lecture in various places, most of which he was compelled to decline on the ground of his health.

One incident may be mentioned in connection with his mediumship remarkable for its oddity. While in the backwoods of Maine, the mother-in-law of one of his

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acquaintances died of dropsy. Her body was deposited in a very large coffin, made by a carpenter retiring from business, and designed for the reception of his own. William was earnestly requested to attend the funeral, and give an address on the occasion, and accordingly he set out through the shady woods, which were very beautiful and secluded, disturbed by no sound louder than the singing of the birds, the flight of the squirrel from bough to bough, and the sudden splash of the leaping trout as it darted at a gnat on the surface of the stream crossing the little pathway. With his spirit attuned to the harmony of the scene,—such harmony as seems to exist only in places far from the haunts of men,—he arrived at his destination. It was a curious change. Three elderly women met him on the threshold of the house, swinging tansy on that hot day when every breath of pure air was beyond price. On entering the apartment where the people were assembled, he found them all sitting around it in solemn expectation, with their shirt-collars starched, their trousers starched, even their pockethandkerchiefs starched, and all likewise swinging tansy. Outside in the yard, and exposed to a burning July sun, lay the coffin, and in full view of this dolorous spectacle, and in the midst of the circle of friends, was placed an arm-chair stuffed with pillows, into which William was conducted and sank till he was nearly eclipsed. As may be supposed, the ordeal of this funeral oration was one from which he would willingly have excused himself, but a courageous spirit rose to the occasion and spoke through his lips with a power more effectual than the tansy, the starch, and the pillows of state in which his body nearly experienced suffocation. He could

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not help being keenly alive to the ludicrous side of the scene in which he was invited to play a part, and to this hour he alludes to it with smiles.

Although he declined much of the work that was placed before him, he saw a large number of persons, sometimes as many as fifty or sixty a day, and effected some remarkable cures by spirit-power, literally healing the sick, the lame, and even the blind. As he did not derive as much benefit from the change which had been recommended as was expected, no doubt, in part, owing to this sudden development of his mediumship and the various demands upon it, he returned to his father's house in the close of September, and from thence went to visit some relations in Concord, New Hampshire. While in that place he was directed by spirit-influence to apply for a hall to lecture in, which he was told would be given to him. He did so, and his request was at once granted by the owner with singular kindness. His lectures were advertised in the local papers, and on the first night, to his surprise, the hall was crowded, and many persons were turned away, unable to obtain entrance. This first public address was one of his most successful efforts, and was very favourably spoken of and reported by the press, and a gentleman, who was present, was so deeply interested that he made an engagement with the young trance-speaker to lecture twice in the neighbouring town. Great success attended the meetings, and with his name already marked in connection with powerful and eloquent speaking, Willie returned home. By this time the spiritualist journals had taken up the matter, and he found awaiting him more engagements than he could fulfil.

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## CHAPTER II.

### COMMENCEMENT OF PUBLIC WORK.

THE young medium was now fairly launched in the work which, of all others, has been the most misunderstood, and the greatest this century has seen. His heart began to be fully engrossed in it, if indeed it could ever have been said to be apart from what had been a reality to him from his childhood.

It was about this period that the companionship he required, and which has ever since been a source of strength to him, was found in the event which, of all others, is the best or worst which can occur in the life of man. He became acquainted with Mrs. Susie Willis, (*née* Webster), who is well known in the United States as a lecturer, and it was while she was addressing an audience that he first saw her. She was then engaged to a wealthy Baptist minister, whom she intended shortly to marry. In the summer of 1871, both attended a spiritualist camp meeting, and in the course of a séance in the evening, Winona, who had now become William Fletcher's principal spirit-control, spoke to her, and said, "You will not marry the man who is engaged to you. I can see the one you will marry." Although received with utter incredulity at the time, Winona's prediction was, as usual, verified, and very shortly afterwards the Baptist minister's engagement-ring was returned to him, and circumstances brought William Fletcher and Mrs. Willis closer together. Well for the sake of the truth was it that this event occurred, for had

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the marriage of the latter taken place as anticipated, the minister would have done his best to set aside the use of those great spiritual gifts which were given to Susie Willis from childhood, and which have effected so much good to a large number of persons who have appreciated them, and valued her friendship. She, also, was a clairvoyant from childhood, and commenced lecturing at the early age of fifteen, so that her whole life had well prepared her for the career which was before her husband. The marriage took place much earlier than had been intended, as they wished to commence an independent life, and it was accordingly solemnised at the house of Mrs. Willis' father, at Lawrence, Massachusetts, on the afternoon of March 24th, 1872. The wedding was celebrated by several little receptions given there, and also at Westford, where some rooms were placed at their disposal by William's father, and for a time the latter place became their home.

This marriage was the stronghold of his life, and the means through which his mediumship became widely known. In character William Fletcher was simple and affectionate, but exceedingly sensitive, and easily elated or depressed; he was quickly roused to indignation by wrong, but was gentle and very forgiving by nature; in intellect he was intuitive and strongly original—a thinker and reformer—but without the practical capacities which make a way in the world. Poetry and music he passionately loved, and possessing a refined and pure nature his instincts led him to shrink from those around him rather than to commence a battle with their materialism. He would have lived a dream-life of his own, and met with neither

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censure nor welcome but for the strong spirit who now stood at his side. When he faltered, she encouraged, and when many a time during the years to come his pale face grew a shade paler still, and the tears would come in his eyes from contact with some cruel thought or action, she chased away the cloud with a smile of tenderness and a firm voice, which encouraged him always to look on the best side of all he met with, and to work on.

I cannot refrain from devoting a few words to Mrs. Fletcher's mediumship before passing on to the events which followed. Her late work in giving free weekly séances at the British National Association of Spiritualists has demonstrated the valuable nature of her gifts to many inquirers, and on the occasions on which I have been present I have been deeply impressed by the charity and love, and the exalted nature of the sentiments expressed by the controlling spirits. They breathed an atmosphere radiant with the presence of a purer world than ours, one in which narrow theologies had perished for ever in the light of truth. She has had many wonderful experiences. A spirit saved her from entering the fated train which fell over the bridge at Ashtabula, by holding her back as she was on the point of entering the railway carriage, and with such power that she felt compelled to yield. A few hours later came the telegram with the news of the terrible accident, and, like many others, she felt the deepest gratitude to those guardians of her life who have never failed her, and for whose care she could indeed thank God. To spend a few days in her company is enough to convince anyone of the existence of spirits, let his scepticism be what it may.

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The residence at Westford did not last long. The circumstances which led to an estrangement with William's family reduced them to a condition in which professional mediumship seemed the only resource. In 1873 they accordingly went for the first time to the Lake Pleasant camp meeting, where a large number of well-known mediums and spiritualists were gathered together. While there, William had an extraordinary vision. He was sitting on the borders of the lake, and, as the afternoon was drawing to a close, his friends came to search for him, and they all rested together for a while under the trees. Suddenly he saw a brilliant light in a sort of little pathway among the pines, which seemed to illuminate the whole scene around them, and a spirit appeared before their astonished gaze of such marvellous power and beauty that all who beheld the sight were overcome with awe and emotion. Like the Roman soldiers of old, to whom came a like vision, some nearly fainted with terror. He slowly raised his head, and threw a star-like light towards our medium, and then, advancing closer, laid his hand upon his head, and gradually became absorbed into his body. The spirit, who announced himself as that of an ancient Egyptian, began to deliver a message through the lips of the entranced medium,* and the words are so remarkable, part of the prophecies having been already literally fulfilled, that I give them, as far as possible, in full. Addressing Mrs. Fletcher, he said: "This instrument through whom I speak has a great work to do beyond the sea, and he will go to a land where he is a stranger. In three years from this time

* An advanced spirit can easily use any human language familiar to the medium employed, and which is impressed on his brain.

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you will be located in London. My medium will commence the work, but you will previously visit London and prepare the way for him, and within three years you will both be living there. He will visit Egypt and Palestine for the purpose of gathering strength and power, and the spirit of prophecy, which is really stamped upon every inch of surface in the very soil of those psychic lands. He will then return to London, and I see him first in small apartments alone. He will enter into the very teeth of opposition, and for a time it will be very hard, for he will receive no welcome from those who should be his brothers in the cause. I see you change into a house"—and here the spirit accurately described the rooms occupied by the Fletchers in Bloomsbury Place—"where you will remain only a year, and here your public success, which will be very great, will begin. I now see a large hall before me, and this place will become a centre of work for this cause. You will then leave the house I have described, and will enter another one, and notwithstanding that you will think you have encountered all the opposition that is possible, you will find that *it will then only commence.* This medium will be called upon to sacrifice everything for principle, and as he is true to that principle, so will the end be. For at this time he will have won his spiritual independence, and the band of spirits around him will be obliged to trust the result in his hands, and as he is faithful or false to the truth so will be that result. Trouble is before him. If he is true to principle there is but one thing which awaits him, and that is, a prison. He will have to choose between giving up all things and gaining only a prison-cell on the one hand, and obtaining all that fortune and compensation

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for injury can give him on the other. His grandest work will be with men of the world, who are ignorant of spiritual truths, until he is finally welcomed and acknowledged, not only in England, but throughout Europe. I see the prison before me, and it is at that time of trial that every latent force of his nature will be unfolded, till at last Europe shall ring with his name."

So far the prophecies of this extraordinary spirit have been completely fulfilled; and the future must speak for the accuracy of what remain.

William Fletcher and his wife then went to Boston, and presented themselves at the office of the *Banner of Light*, where great kindness was shewn to them by Mr. Rich, one of the partners in the firm, who offered them rooms and introduced them to many persons to whom their unusual gifts were of great service, while their fame as test-mediums rapidly increased. There they remained until the spring of 1875.

One night a spirit spoke to Mrs. Fletcher in an audible voice, and said, "Rise at once, and get ready to go to London." She was naturally not a little puzzled at the sudden and peremptory nature of the command. It was on the evening of one day in April. The order was repeated in a louder tone. Mrs. Fletcher inquired when she was to start. The voice replied, "On the 19th. Twice you have obeyed without questioning—are you ready to do so the third time?" She said "*I am*," and made the necessary preparations at once. On arriving at the docks shortly afterwards, and making application to the steward of the steamship about to leave, she was informed that the state-rooms were engaged, and that she could not go. The

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captain, however, overheard her request, and said that as he spent much of his time in his deck-room, she might have his cabin. This, she of course, declined, but as she did so, a man came hastily on board to say that as his wife had been taken dangerously ill, he was unable to sail, and must give up his state-room. It was at once placed at the disposal of Mrs. Fletcher, and within two hours they set sail for England. At the very commencement of the voyage she had a strong impression that the captain would become one of her best friends. It was a source of strength and comfort to her, for few, if any of us, have been told to go to an unfamiliar land in which we should be utter strangers, and at a few hours' notice to take passage for it on board a steamer which contained not a single person one could call a friend, and more than all, to do this with apparently inadequate means, for some purpose unrecognised and unrevealed. Among the forty passengers who daily assembled on deck and in the saloon, only four were ladies, and all were strangers to Mrs. Fletcher. She sat during meals at the captain's table, the place by some chance having been assigned to her, but hardly had there been time for her to make acquaintance with the sole person who had shewn kindness to her, than she succumbed to a serious illness. That illness became the means, not only of verifying her presentiment, but of changing the desolate steamer into an actual home. The attack commenced with ordinary sea-sickness, turned to inflammatory fever, and at last she became delirious for an entire day. Her illness excited the utmost sympathy among her fellow-passengers, and when the turning-point reached she was able to say, "I fell asleep first in this

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little cabin surrounded by strangers, and in five days I have awakened to find them friends." The captain shewed her every kindness and attention, and they were speedily on the most pleasant and friendly of terms. One day he suddenly said to her, "Excuse me, but are you not a spiritualist?" Mrs. Fletcher at once acknowledged it. He said, "Seven years ago, I had a lady on board who was a medium, but I am a total unbeliever myself. I felt you were one while talking to you." In consequence of this discovery of the captain's, the subject of spiritualism was discussed almost every evening, producing, as is usually the case, the expression of every shade of opinion, and of course the inevitable opposition of a clergyman who was among the passengers. He was, however, a little more charitable than most of his cloth, and expressed his belief that it was "all magnetism." "I know what it is," he said, "a distorted imagination, that is the secret of the whole thing." Mrs. Fletcher said, "If so, what would you say if that imagination were infallible, and were to tell you more truth than you ever get from any human beings, or ever learnt before in all your life?" The clergyman replied, "I never knew a medium who could tell *me* anything." The moment he uttered these words Mrs. Fletcher became clairvoyant, and saw standing by the side of this gentleman a lady so distinctly visible, that she began to describe her. "I see a lady near you," she said, "who wears a white silk with chocolate-coloured leaves. She says, 'Oh, Alfred, you were so kind to insist on their putting this dress on me, because you know I should have liked to be laid out in that better than in anything else.'" The clergyman started, and said, "Mrs. Fletcher, *what* do you mean?" She replied,



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"It is your wife. The mother and child died before the child was born." He exclaimed, "It *is* true, every word of it. It *is* my wife. Her friends wished her to be laid out in the usual way, but I said she should wear the dress with the chocolate-coloured leaves as I knew she would have liked it." He added, "Well, you are right. No matter what the Bible says, it is a fact. It was not in my mind,—the only thought in my mind was that it was absolutely impossible for you to tell me anything." He gradually changed into an avowed spiritualist, and the captain not only became one also, but one of her truest friends. Out of the voyages of nine years, none, he said, had been so full of interest for him as this.

Among her fellow-passengers was a Scotchman, whom Mrs. Fletcher had almost repelled. As they were steaming up the Clyde he came on deck and proposed to them all that they should sing "Home again." How sadly the words rang in her ears she alone knew, for she was going *from* home, and there was nothing homelike to her in the strange and unfamiliar shores which were so welcome to the rest. She stole away to her little cabin. There the captain found her, and swinging open the door, he told her he knew what home-sickness was, and full of the unexpressed sympathy which is more than words, he gave her his arm, led her on deck, and they watched the passengers, who merrily sang and danced. In the midst of this Mrs. Fletcher felt a hand upon her forehead, and saw a lady standing by her. She asked her "who she was." The reply came, "I'm not dead,—not dead." Mrs. Fletcher said, "I thought you were a spirit." The lady answered: "I'm *Archie's mother*. I always think of him, and come when

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he enters port,—and I have shown myself to you." Mrs. Fletcher repeated this to the captain, who did not deny the statement, and remarked that it was strange. Some time later he acknowledged that he had seen his mother, on one of these occasions, come to him in his cabin.

That night Mrs. Fletcher went alone to London, feeling desolate and forlorn. The brief companionships of the voyage had passed away,—her passenger-friends were scattered; she was alone. On her arrival in London, that great, cold ocean of life which swallows up its individual drops with such mighty scorn, the first person she met was the old Scotchman. They greeted one another,—fresh with the memories of the recent voyage—like old friends. He begged her to accompany him to the Langham Hotel and dine with him in comfort, and grateful for the genuine kindness and hospitality of the offer, she acquiesced, and his friendly companionship destroyed the dreary feeling with which she looked upon our sombre metropolis for the first time. He remained with her for the day, and then returned to his home in the north. Friendliness seemed to have brightened her strange journey like sunshine breaking through a wintry sky.

From the Langham Hotel Mrs. Fletcher repaired first to a well-known healing medium, of whom she had known a little in America, and he referred her to Mr. James Burns, of 15, Southampton Row, otherwise called the *Spiritual Institution.* Mr. Burns recommended apartments in Vernon Place. It was the only occasion on which Mrs. Fletcher crossed the threshold of the Institution, owing to the opposition which seemed to exist there towards her friends of the *Banner of Light* office, and the misapprehen-



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sion with which the social principles she advocated in their highest sense were received. She was introduced to Mrs. Anne Kimball, and through the agency of a few friends commenced to receive patients at her rooms. With the honesty of a strong and pure nature, one ready to sacrifice the world for her conscience, Mrs. Fletcher avowed her adherence to the principle that love—the highest love, that is—between man and woman should be free; not, however, with the freedom of license, but of liberty. This apparently much-misunderstood doctrine, which, so far as I am aware, simply means harmonious instead of inharmonious marriage, and liberty to make it, brought her no little criticism from some of those British minds whose tendency it is to materialise, and consequently degrade, the higher truths of humanity. It, however, excited the sympathy of a few thoughtful friends. Among these and others to whom she gave daily sittings, she remained for some three months in London. Then came the order to leave, given as suddenly as was the one in Boston. One night she heard a spirit-voice say to her, "Everything is ready for your return. We have made a way for Mr. Fletcher." She was told to prepare at once, and that she would be able to go. With unquestioning faith she drove next morning to the offices of the Cunard Company, and found she could leave by train in time to catch the steamer at Queenstown, and on her arrival there she went on board. They had not steamed out far before Mrs. Fletcher felt a singular influence, and a prevision of events which were to happen during the voyage. The captain was a materialist, but it did not prevent her from telling him what she foresaw, and while they were walking together on the deck she said, "I

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feel that we are going to have a gale before we land, and when eight days out we shall have a collision, and there will be loss of life, but not on our side." The captain laughed, and replied that she was a cheerful prophet. The prophecies, however, were verified. Within eight days the steamer ran down a schooner, and twelve out of the fourteen sailors on board the latter were drowned, and after a calm passage, the weather suddenly changed, and they encountered a three days' gale. Five persons became converts to spiritualism during the voyage, and the subject was much discussed, a veteran spiritualist being among the passengers. Meetings were held in the saloon, and lectures given on Sunday, and a successful séance concluded the manifestations, which even amid the unfavourable conditions and influences surrounding an ocean steamer did not fail to give proof of the power of spirits to advise and forewarn, and to furnish evidence of the reality of the unseen.

Amid apparently insurmountable obstacles, the long journey to England had been accomplished in safety, and the way prepared for her husband's work to begin.

Who in these days would have started on a voyage of thousands of miles, with no adequate means either for the journey or the necessaries of life at the journey's end? Like the Apostles of old these two workers went forth as they were bidden, "having neither scrip, nor gold, nor silver," nor anything provided.

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## CHAPTER III.

### SENT INTO THE WORLD.

"A gentle sound, an awful light!
Two angels bear the Holy Grail."

WILLIAM FLETCHER had now achieved that which is essential to every great worker in the world,—his independence. His sensitive nature had, previously to this, shrunk from all contact with strangers, and he trusted to the one who was most closely associated with him,—his wife—to stand between him and the various and keenly-felt influences of the many visitors who called upon him for interviews, and to obtain proofs of the reality of his extraordinary gifts. Forced to rely upon himself or to give up what he felt to be a sacred truth, he summoned up courage to go on alone, and in this way the latent strength of his spirit became developed for a world-wide crusade.

Success began to make his name widely known, but just as a pathway seemed open before him for permanent and influential work in America, his health suddenly failed him again, and domestic trouble rose to its climax and severed him at once and for ever from the home-ties to which he had always clung. Symptoms of lung-disease of an alarming kind showed themselves, and his medical attendant said that residence in a warm climate was absolutely necessary. To William the advice seemed much the same as a recommendation to stand for the Presidency of the United States. His fortune was sacrificed; he had only just begun to obtain means sufficient on which to live, and a long and

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expensive journey demanding a large sum of money and absolute rest for himself was a scheme which appeared to him utterly hopeless. He could only give up his séances for a time, and rely on the assistance rendered by Mrs. Fletcher, which was necessary for their bare maintenance. She gave sittings, and devoted her time and wonderful spiritual gifts to their visitors, and he remained helpless in the grasp of what seemed likely to prove a fatal disease. But the same God who had given him a power which at the appointed time was destined to influence our age, and which had led him forth to make that power recognised by his fellows, decreed that His work should be done, and in His own way, notwithstanding every obstacle. The New Year came. On the 1st January, 1876, one of his band of spirits came to him and wished him a "happy New Year." It seemed almost like a mockery, but the far-seeing spirit went on—"This year," he said, "will be one of the most eventful in your life. You will cross the water; before a month is out, you will be in London."

It seemed incredible: the two forlorn workers could only accept the message in silence, and await the result. They did not wait long. On the 7th a gentleman whom they had happened to meet, called upon them to say goodbye. He was about to leave the United States, and to go to Europe for the remainder of the winter. In the course of conversation, and while he was expressing his regret at the condition of William's health, Mrs. Fletcher could not help exclaiming in reply, "I wish Mr. Fletcher were going with you!" The gentleman instantly answered, "Let him come." She, of course, replied that it was out of the question, and the subject was dropped. On the

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following Sunday night, however, their friend called again, accompanied by his wife. He said: "You know I am not a medium, but I dreamed that a spirit came to me last night and said '*Take Fletcher with you.*' Why can't he come?" Mrs. Fletcher said: "You know his circumstances, and how impossible it is for him to take such a journey as you propose." The lady, however, pressed the point. "I ask," she said, "for his companionship as a favour. It will complete our party, and he will be able to accompany my daughter to places where I have not energy enough to take her. It will help his mediumship." But the Fletchers, from a feeling of doubt as to the expediency of the plan suggested, again declined the kind offer. In vain Mr. S—— urged William to reconsider it—"It is the only thing," he said, "to save your life. Will you not come?" He replied, "No." And Mr. S—— left them, after being finally told that the plan was absolutely impossible. At five o'clock that morning a spirit controlled Mrs. Fletcher and said to her husband, "Get up and pack your trunk, and at once." The energy of the spirit and the urgent command had its effect; he was told that it was a duty, and that the proposal made to him had been purposely designed, and he felt an irresistible power was influencing him. He rose at once, and obeyed the order. Hardly was his trunk filled before Mr. S—— came again, and informed them that he had not been able to sleep. He found William, to his delight, prepared to join him, and only just in time. They drove off together: the berth was secured, and the following day the invalid was on his way to Europe, and the prophecy that he would be in London in the course of the month was fulfilled. After spending a

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week or two there, during which he had no connection with the work of spiritualism, the party travelled towards the south, visiting Paris, Cannes, Marseilles, Nice, Florence, and Venice, till they finally crossed the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

The warm, dry air of Alexandria was a very elixir of life to one in the condition of our medium. They all went there together, and remained for a while among those scenes of sunny Egypt which are full of the psychic life of other ages, and which appealed to his intuitive nature and clairvoyant faculties in a way such as few can realise. The life of the present, with its railway, its noisy hotel, its picturesque Orientals, its medley of bustling porters, beggars, and donkey-boys, all strangely contrasted with the solemn inner life which hung in mystery around the ancient "Needles," the Pyramids, the stately Memnon, and the solitary Sphinx,

—"staring right on with calm, eternal eyes."

Here, if ever anywhere, was concentrated the life of the past, a life of which we, with all our knowledge, know next to nothing. The ascent of the Great Pyramid was made; the 470 feet laboriously surmounted, the desert view beheld stretching out beneath far and wide in all its unbroken stillness. Few know the secret written in solemn language in its very stones; none perhaps before, since it had been upreared, had stood upon its apex, and realised how soon the era to which it has pointed with silent finger was about to dawn, and the sealed secret be yielded up. Many, indeed, recognise the closing prophecies of our time, and look for some mighty change to come upon the earth; but—*what?*

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Shall the key of all religions, of the world's great history and meaning be recognised in this apocalypse of stone? Shall the weird mysteries of the "beloved disciple" with their final vision of endless life and glory, at last be understood? The hastening hours will show.

After visiting this most interesting of earthly scenes, William set out for the Holy Land. I cannot do better than give some of his experiences therein in his own words.* He writes: "A ride on the Suez Canal, with the countless stars shining overhead, and the moonbeams shedding beauties over the waters, is indeed a joy. The party are all pleasant people, although we contain ministers of every denomination, and just as the bells are tolling the hour for midnight we step on shore at Port Said, to rest for the remainder of the night. From this port we take an Austrian steamer for ancient Joppa, or Jaffa, as it is now called. The harbour is a very bad one, the sea very rough, but we are obliged to take small boats sent out to meet us two miles from the shore. . . . . It was at this port that the cedars of Lebanon were landed for the building of King Solomon's far-famed temple. . . . It is noted for two things; first, as having been the abiding-place of Simon the Tanner, and, secondly, for its extensive orange-groves. . . The groves cover about forty acres, and yield about one million to the acre; the fruit measures from fifteen inches in circumference downwards." A pleasant place in truth for ancient Simon and all other men, notwithstanding the harbour and the rough sea!

"We next proceeded to the *Holy Land.* The most

* From letters published at the time.

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infidel among us have all had visionary ideas, clothed with whatever poetry the imagination possessed, of this land where the great Passion Play upon which Christianity has built its faith was enacted. We tell our children of them, and in hours of thought they seem to be localities and places that belong to another world; the hills and valleys are not made of common clay. In reading the Bible we have peopled these places from our imagination, have dilated on their glories, and grown eloquent over their beauties. A ride of ten miles brings us to the ancient Tower of Ramleh, still standing, surrounded by its cloisters, 'through which the footsteps of godly men were wont to echo.' . . . Then came the lovely plains of Sharon, green and fertile in the warm sunshine; most of the party left the carriages and walked, picking here and there the beautiful lilies of the field, whose richness of colour outshone the glory of Solomon."

"All along the country little farm work is being done; the expectation of war has called many of the younger men away; here and there are fields, old men and women ploughing with ploughs made of a picked stick, such as Abraham is supposed to have used. . . . After a while we come to the lofty hills of Judæa, and begin their ascent. . . . Long lines of camels, loaded with heavy burdens, wind along the mountain-side, while all around, these lofty hills rise towards the deep blue sky, wrapped in a silence impressive and deep. Formerly, these hills were fertile and productive, and were terraced to their very summit and covered with olive and fig trees; but that was long years ago. Time, with its ceaseless changes, has swept all this verdure away; the winds have blown the

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earth into the valleys, and where once vegetation flourished now desolation reigns. . . . All eyes are now looking anxiously for Jerusalem, as we gain some new eminence; finally, our dragoman, who is in advance, waves his hat, and we gain fresh courage. Everybody is silent—for we all feel that we are about to look upon that city whose name and whose renown have been sung in nearly every land; that we are about to see Mount Zion, the Siloam, and many other sacred spots dear to every human heart."

"We saw Jerusalem at a good time and from a good point; the sun was just setting, flooding mountain and valley with its glorious light. The lofty minaret of the Mosque of Omar and the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre rose like watch-towers over the walled city. . . . At the gates we were compelled to leave our carriages, as there is no street in Jerusalem over six feet wide, and no vehicles are allowed in the city."

"After a walk of some distance, under arches and over-hanging buildings, we came to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is built upon the site where so many tragic events were enacted. Entering the building through the inevitable assemblage of beggars, the first object which meets the eye is the Turkish guard; for as all these denominations have chapels under the same roof, so is it necessary to have a guard in constant attendance to keep them from fighting with each other, and this, too, in a temple dedicated to the Prince of Peace! Before you is the marble slab which covers the Stone of Unction, whereon they say the body of Jesus was laid to prepare it for its final burial. Near this is the spot 'where the Virgin stood while his body was being anointed.' A few steps from this,

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in the Rotunda, we come to the most sacred spot on earth, —a spot where, instinctively, the most unthinking of us tread lightly, speak softly, and hold our breath,—the supposed grave of Jesus. It is inclosed in a sort of temple, and on either side of the entrance to it are immense candles. Within the temple is a part of the very stone they also say which was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, and upon which the angel sat; around them hang many lamps of gold and silver, gifts of the sovereigns of Europe."

"All the Christians (except Protestants) have chapels here, and service is going on at all hours; it resembles a gymnastic school exhibition, to see these men bowing down and kissing the earth! Who can realise that *this* is *Calvary*,—that on this spot the worn and bleeding body of a man was torn down from an instrument of death and torture,—counted too low even for human sympathy—this spot of which Christian poets dream and sing? Yet we know it is,—all history points to it with an unerring finger. The Catholics hold the spot, and Catholic service is going on; and each silently praising God that rest has long since come to the weary worker, we pass down the stairs. It is a place that admits of no words; we are standing, desecrated though they be, face to face with the realities."

"The next object of interest, and one that, with its court, occupies one-fourth of Jerusalem, is the Mosque of Omar. To a Mahomedan the Mosque is the most sacred spot on earth, and none but the faithful were once admitted; but a silver key fits many locks now-a-days, and for a franc one can go where one likes. There is an immense rock in the centre of the Rotunda; on this rock (so, I need not say,

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runs the legend), Abraham came near offering up his son Isaac, and the angel stood and threatened Jerusalem, and David persuaded him to spare the city. Mahomed ascended from the stone to heaven. . . . It is claimed that the rock is suspended in the air, and there is a stairway that leads under it. There is also a 'saving-stone,' as it is called, in the floor; you put money on it, and your sins are pardoned. We did so. A priest came along, and with the quiet dignity of a roulette-player counted the money and walked off, and we dispute the matter whether that investment will pay dividends or not."

"Down in the ground, underneath the court of the great Mosque, are the remains of Solomon's Temple—such masonry as we know nothing of; not a thin wall filled in with rubbish, but blocks of stone so solid and firm that all the changes of time have failed to crumble or change them —those grand arches which *suggest* the imposing beauty of that structure which once stood above. We go down another flight, and see a place hewn out of a rock, said to have been the cradle of Jesus; there are Persian rugs before it, and here come the people to worship, kneeling before it, and kissing the cold granite. Oh! that they could but love each other as they do their idols! The pools of Siloam still send forth their clear streams of water wherein, in olden time, such wonders were wrought; Gethsemane still blooms with a verdure distinctively its own; Mount Olivet rises heavenward as of yore, and the hill of Evil Counsel, with its solitary tree on which Judas hung himself, stands out against the sky. The outward scenes are still the same. This, then, is Jerusalem: and there are here less than 100 Protestant Christians.

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Revivals are unknown, and missionaries are forced to labour long, and with poor results."

There is a sadness in the description of these sacred spots,—the scenes of suffering only those who have become martyrs for truth can understand,—with which one may well sympathise. There, the wretched mob which gathered round the Christ, and cried "Crucify him! crucify him!" has for ever passed away, nameless and dishonoured; and men now kneel to kiss the pathway over which his weary feet had passed. But alas! the same mouths which kiss those hallowed stones can breathe curses and words of scorn; and the Christianity of nearly two thousand years of age, is as full of bloodshed as though the Prince of Peace had never told men to love one another. The irony of the tawdry homage at Calvary, and the dull materialism of the worshippers, form a picture of Christianity as it everywhere exists. Worship of the letter, and mental slavery, combined with war, and religious despotism, and vice; rejection of truth, and persecution of the Heaven-sent messengers of God. Again might the mournful cry be repeated from another Olivet—"If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes!" *Hid* by an inner blindness, such as only the long education of suffering can remove.

I quote the concluding descriptions of the visit to this once-favoured land: that which relates to the closing scene in the great tragedy of the past,—the betrayal of the Saviour of men.

"We climb the staircase that leads to the outer wall of Mount Zion, and, having reached the highest point, we

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mark out our pathway for the day; below us is the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and beyond that Mount Olivet, and, still further on, the Jordan winds its way. We pass out through the city gates to the valley, and soon descend a few steps, and stand before the celebrated pools of Siloam, where, in those ancient days, so many wonders were performed; the large square basin, some twenty feet in depth, is still perfect, and it was here the baptisms took place. There is also an entrance into a rock in the hill, where the water bubbles up clear and fresh."

"Before us rises a high white wall; we knock at a low, small door therein, and soon a clanking of chains and jingling of keys are heard, the door swings open, and an old Franciscan priest stands before us. We are obliged to stoop to enter, and as we do so the guide whispers, '*Gethsemane*'—a word as dear to us as sacredness can make it. A lovelier spot I have never seen; directly inside the wall is a gravelled walk around the garden; shrines are set in the wall, illustrative of the life of Jesus, and before these shrines devotees are kneeling. The garden is enclosed by a high iron fence. The gate swung open for us, and we found ourselves in a lovely little garden with a high, well-trimmed box border, and the beds fresh and bright with fair blossoms; there are also many olive-trees here—the one under which Peter slept, the one under which Jesus prayed during the long, weary night, and the one under which Judas gave the kiss, are shown as still standing; the tree pointed out by tradition as the one under which those prayers arose has a carpet of English violets in bloom all the year round, and we could but feel that no softer cushion could be found, and no sweeter incense could rise to

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heaven than that of these fair blossoms. We gathered a few for memory's sake; it jarred a little to see the spot so cultivated, and yet perhaps it is as well, for the voiceless language of these flowers is better attuned to singing His praises than human tongues can ever be. The Catholics own the ground, and the Greeks have lately fought with them; and now these last are to have another!"

William Fletcher entered there in no curious spirit. He was bidden to enter that never-to-be-forgotten spot of ground, and it was in Gethsemane he saw the holy vision which came to no other eyes but his, and which filled the place with the splendour of another world. He beheld,—in the self-same spot where he had suffered and been betrayed,—the Christ, once more on earth, and surrounded by the twelve apostles. Above him rose a beautiful arch of light, supported on either end by the two Maries. He asked of these two, "What does this mean?" The reply came: "I was first at the cross, and last at the sepulchre. I am the first to herald in the arch of triumph, and the last to desert it." So truly were fulfilled the words—"The glory which thou gavest me I have given *them*," and "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

They brought this arch until it rested directly over our medium, and there appeared a white dove upon the breast of Christ, which flew down upon his head. From it he drew a folded letter, on which was written "*Sealed orders*," and this he took and placed within his bosom. Then fell upon his ears the beautiful and touching words—"As thy day, so shall thy strength be, and as ye give unto my little ones a cup of cold water, so shall it be returned unto you a thousandfold."



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The sequel came in Paris,—that city of gaiety and earthly pleasure. Strange contrast! William had retired to rest, and as he lay in bed, he felt a hand laid upon his shoulder. Looking up he again beheld Christ, who simply said to him—"You may read your orders. They are *to go to London.* Take up your cross and follow me."



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## CHAPTER IV.

### WORK IN LONDON.

I MUST here retrace the course of events a little, and carry my reader to Rome, which William Fletcher visited, together with Naples, Florence, and Geneva, on his way from the Holy Land to Paris. He vividly describes the external impressions made on his mind by the classic ground on which he stood at last, like so many other of his countrymen; the *internal* ones, — the unseen histories written on palace, and wall, and temple,—the indelible influences of the strongly-pulsing life of the people who once ruled the world,—who shall picture in words? There they are, only waiting the spiritual insight of the coming race to yield up their hidden treasure, and reveal the ancient story as no libraries on earth can ever tell them. Just as the events of Abraham's time may be read in the light which is now falling upon some far-off planet in space, if science there has reached a point which enables the beings who people it to read the vision, so also may the events of the past be read by the clairvoyant eye in the indelible magnetic influence which is thrown by some strong human passions or sufferings, into the very walls which looked down upon them in stony silence.

Men dig up the winged bulls and the carved slabs of a Nineveh, and think they know somewhat of the races of the past; the psychometrist picks up, or is given, a fragment of the statue or the temple wall, and places it to his forehead,—and beholds in a living dream, the scenes, the forms, the



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costumes, the very actions of men who have passed away from the life of earth thousands of years ago. They appear, not as living spirits,—there is a world-wide difference between the breathing spirits who surround us and communicate with man, and the spiritual stories of a far-back age,—but as a *vision* engraven by the soul-force which is the inner life of all physical matter, and which has received the overpowering magnetic influences of strong human presences, and the events with which they were concerned. The hour which shall make this strange psychometric faculty known, now the gift of a few of the ridiculed of earth's children, although recent researches have faintly indicated the possible indelibility of apparently transient impressions, will point to a new era in the spiritual development of man. The era which makes it the acknowledged power of all, points to the advent of a new science; a science which will penetrate the underlying realities of life with a piercing gaze; which will reveal the unconscious immortality in nature, and bid the very rocks and their buried pages yield up the secrets for which geology asks in vain. I know that hour will come, let who will attempt to stay its advancement; as well might the ape-savage of the past declare he would not become civilised man,—mock at his science, poetry, and art. "Without haste, without rest," in spite of suffering, of ignorance, of hatred of the appointed way, the human race sweeps onward to accomplish God's grand design: who can stay its progress?

What did our medium see on the Parthian Hill, in the Coliseum, under the Arch of Titus, in the Appian Way? In his recorded letter, he is silent, as he was silent about the holy

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presences in Gethsemane, and I do not break the reserve he has maintained. He tells the outer story, and it is easy to see how his spirit, glowing with the light of the new religion, recoils from the materialism and the fetish-worship of the orthodox beliefs.

"The churches," he writes, "in Rome are next in interest, and hold many of the sacred relics which Catholics prize so highly; among the most noted are the stairs in Pilate's house, which Jesus is said to have ascended at the time of judgment. These are in a small chapel, called the Scala Sancta. They are of white marble, and covered with wood; persons are not allowed to go up *except on their knees*, and I am sorry to say there were hundreds waiting for an opportunity. The upper step is not covered with wood, and is worn down several inches. . . . Opposite this chapel is the Basilica of St. John Lateran. Constantine founded this Basilica in the fourth century; since then it has ranked as the mother of all Christian churches; the Popes have all been crowned here, and for fifteen hundred years it has retained its privileges . . . Amid the monuments and churches of Rome, St. Peter's towers above them all; from any point of the city its magnificent proportions can be plainly seen, but it is impossible for the mind to measure its immense size, except by going to the top of the rotunda, and looking down upon it. . . . Nearly opposite the altar is a colossal statue of St. Peter, in a sitting posture; one foot is extended, and his far-famed big toe is prominently seen. Every man, woman, and child, whoever expects, hopes, or desires to see his saintship in Heaven, kisses this beloved toe! and the consequence is, the statue of St. Peter will soon need a new one, unless the people get more com-

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mon sense, and altogether it is much easier to acquire the former than the latter.

"There is also a chair of ivory, called St. Peter's chair, surrounded by fine statuary, and in addition a piece of the original cross, a lock of the Virgin Mary's hair, the handkerchief that Pilate's wife gave Jesus, upon which the print of his face was left, and some other relics; these were all shown to the people, after the *Miserere* the day before Easter Sunday, before an immense audience, amid the shouts, chants and prayers of the worshippers. I reflected on this wise: there are *only* three hundred and sixty-five Catholic churches in Rome, and *only* five thousand priests and monks, and prayers begin at three o'clock a.m., and *only* last till ten a.m., and if prayers and churches will save a people or a city, then ought not Rome of all others to be most blest?"

"And yet, with the building of these churches, and the advent of these priests, the sun of Rome's greatness has set for ever. No more the statesmen, no more the orators of the grand old past, but *imitators* of those masters, who can only reproduce in a small way, and never originate. And so it will be with every land and with every people who shall follow in this course."

The "worship of the letter" in Jerusalem, in Rome, in England,—wherever it may be—is the *death* of "the spirit." Never more than at this hour of mingled mental slavery and religious and scientific materialism, of ignorance and bigotry, and atheism and anarchy,—has there been required some trumpet-blast to wake these slumbering dead, with holy and angelic voice, and declare that "the letter *killeth*, but the *spirit giveth life.*"

William Fletcher felt he could not remain in Paris,

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after receiving that message the strange words of which close the last chapter. He felt impelled to obey the order given him, and to go to London, where he was again told by many spirits that a great work was before him, and he informed his kind and generous friend that he felt he must leave the pleasant party of travelling companions at last. In a day or two he found himself in the midst of our dark and murky city, and almost friendless, and arriving after a period of gloom for spiritualists, which made them look coldly upon the workers who were being sacrificed for their cause, he then and there, in the month of April, 1877, began his work.

Knowing that there was a place called the *Spiritual Institution* in Southampton Row, he called there the morning after his arrival, and had a brief interview with Mr. James Burns. The place damped his expectations not a little after the large buildings devoted to spiritualism in America, but he was willing to work anywhere for the sake of his cause. "I have been directed by spirit-influence to come to London," he said. "Is there any work for me to do?" Mr. Burns briefly replied, "No. American mediums have ruined the cause here, and I wish none of them would ever set foot in England again."

The spirit of our medium was roused, and he said, "If American mediums have ruined spiritualism in London, I can only say if it is in my power, an American medium shall redeem it," and he left the place.* The scornful

* This simple remark, which was repeated in the *Whitehall Review*, in the course of a very just observation, is the true origin of a series of most unjustifiable attacks upon Mr. Fletcher in a spiritualist paper, replies to which were suppressed by its editor.

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reception, and the general indifference, which would have crushed almost any other man, gave him courage, and assistance came in the midst of his anxieties. Just as he was in the act of turning from the place an American came in who was on the point of leaving England, and who kindly gave him an introduction to a Signor Rondi. He brought no letters of recommendation with him from the States, so that he at once suggested that his mediumship should be tested. This was done, and Signor Rondi expressed himself in every way satisfied with the result, and offered to introduce him to friends. Accordingly he took him to the house of Mrs. Guppy-Volckman, where William Fletcher gave some excellent tests which were very convincing to the persons present, and this resulted in his being invited to one of Mrs. Weldon's receptions, where he was again very successful. Among the guests present were Mr. Martheze, Admiral Inglefield, M. Menier, Mr. G. H. Gledstanes, and Mr. W. H. Harrison, the editor of the *Spiritualist*. One of the first spirits who spoke through him was William White, a late editor of the *Banner of Light*, who wished to speak to Mr. Harrison as a brother in the cause. The latter, however, received him so coldly that the annoyance felt by the spirit reflected itself upon the medium, and made William Fletcher feel unhappy, he did not know why, for several days afterwards. He was not introduced to any of the guests, of whose condition and circumstances he was completely ignorant, but Winona gave some extraordinary tests to Admiral Inglefield, who had been one of the Arctic explorers, and also to M. Menier, and a second séance at Mrs. Weldon's, held on the classic ground of Charles Dickens' library, resulted equally well for

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both medium and sitters. No assistance was given to him by the spiritual journals, which he at once saw were not in harmony with each other, or with the workers for spiritualism as a rule, and it was at this time that the temptation came to him to give up what was plainly a hard and painful struggle, and to return to America, which he greatly wished himself. Some of the spirits around him even despaired of success ; but one night while at a concert, his hand was violently controlled by a spirit, who wrote, "*There is no escape from it. We have great need of you here. You must remain.*" Similar messages came through other sources, and although William Fletcher three times engaged a passage for his return to the States, he never left England, and patiently gave himself up to proving the reality of his power for some four or five months, appointing sittings with many visitors before he would accept the smallest trifle in return, however necessary for his support. "I am going to give my services to be tested," he said, "and if *they* are found worthy of being accepted, we will talk of remuneration by-and-by."

As he decided to remain in London, he presented himself to the British National Association of Spiritualists, without either introduction or friends. "My mediumship," he said, "is all the introduction I ever carry with me, and if you will arrange a séance, I shall be very pleased to give one on the condition that the persons present shall be unknown to me." This was done, and some good tests were given to the sitters which were somewhat badly reported in the *Spiritualist*. After this he began to receive visitors as a professional medium.

Meanwhile, additional strength came to him in the

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presence of his wife, whose fidelity to principle, firm will, and courageous spirit, gave him all the support a nature organised like his required. She had left London on the 17th of July, in the previous year, and the 17th of July, 1877, saw the *California* steaming up the Clyde. As she approached the docks, she suddenly remembered the prophecy made to her by one of the spirit-band around them, that, "within a year she would be in London again." With the exception of a brief absence in the States or on the Continent, there she has remained ever since. A curious proof of spirit-power was given to her on one of the occasions when William Fletcher had telegraphed to say he should return to America, and would leave by a certain steamer, every arrangement having been made to receive him. The day before the arrival of the steamer, Mrs. Fletcher went to the celebrated medium, Charles Forster, and among the questions she wrote in the well-known little paper pellets was one asking whether her husband would arrive as she expected. To this came the reply, "No. The steamer will arrive but you will not see him. He has sent a letter instead, and that letter bids you to join him in London." The statement was perfectly accurate, and the letter duly reached Mrs. Fletcher's hands.

The Fletchers now took a suite of rooms at 4, Bloomsbury Place, and regularly received visitors as professional mediums, although Mrs. Fletcher did not maintain this trying position long. I need hardly remind the reader that they devoted themselves to this work in London almost immediately after the trial of Henry Slade for "obtaining money by false pretences," the possibility of spirit-communication not being recognised by English law. It

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will be remembered that the prosecutors, Ray Lankester and Henry Donkin, deposed to seeing the "slate-writing" take place under circumstances so suspicious that they practically amounted to discovered fraud; that the evidence was narrowed to the one point as to whether Slade did or did not impose upon the two prosecutors; and that the whole of the evidence in behalf of the reality of the phenomenon of "direct writing," or writing which took place without human agency, was excluded, although admitted by the magistrate to be "overwhelming;" that Slade, who pleaded *not guilty*, with all that denial involved, was condemned on the count in question, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour; that an appeal was made, and that he escaped imprisonment on a technical point, after which he immediately left England, suffering from illness. It was felt by all spiritualists that the truth for which they had been fighting such a hard battle was on its trial—not Slade—and that the blow had been aimed with a view of crushing spiritualism in England, and discrediting its witnesses, its open discussion at the British Association in 1876 having excited opposition on the part of certain scientific men, who declared that it had been disgraced by the introduction of the subject. Had the attainment of truth been the desired object, the offer of Slade to Lankester,* which was made immediately after his recovery, would have been accepted, and the subsequent researches of Zöllner, Weber, Fechner, and Scheibner in Germany, in whose presence this unfortunate

* I give that offer at the close of this chapter, and refer the reader to "Psychography," by M.A. (Oxon.) (E. W. Allen, 11, Ave Maria Lane), for evidence with regard to Slade's mediumship.

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medium gave the most successful séances in full daylight, would have excited a careful examination of the facts.

But it is the fate of some men to act the part of the inquisitors of the past, who imprisoned Galileo for telling them a fact they did not know before; the old story is acted with a hundred variations, over and over again. In one age it is astronomical truth; in another religious reform; in a third, a great invention, or an appeal for liberty; and in our own time spiritual truth—that power which can alone unite science and religion in noble harmony, and throw light on the past, the present, and the future. Ignorance and bigotry do their work at this time, as they have done it of yore. But the truth shall prevail.

In the teeth of all these difficulties William Fletcher manfully began his labours, labours for which no money could repay him, for they were given at the expense of his most vital powers, and all that makes life pleasant and dear to human beings. Conscious of his honesty, and of his love for the sacred truth committed to his charge, he entered into an atmosphere dark with the spirit of persecution and suspicion. He knew his danger. One precaution only he at first allowed himself to take, and it was to affix a small placard on the wall of his private room, to which he directed the attention of visitors, pointing out to them plainly that he did not hold himself responsible for failure. He was strongly advised by some friendly spiritualists, who gladly acknowledged his powers, to escape all risk of infringing the statutes by stating that through him were exhibited only certain *mental phenomena*. This was instantly rejected by both William Fletcher and his wife, and to one who begged the latter to reconsider their decision, she said, with all the

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intensity of her strong nature, "God has never lit on your soul as He has on ours. My husband has but one life, and that life is the cause of spiritualism; he has but one truth, and that is the truth of spiritualism; and he has but one God, and that is the God of the spirits."

The friend left her, and appealed to William Fletcher, on behalf of the British National Association of Spiritualists. "Do you consider," he said, "the danger you are in? Your placard is of no use. Do not profess to explain the power given you; give it as mental phenomena." Our medium rose from his chair, and with burning indignation said: "There are only two things which will force me to stop giving my sittings, and claiming that they are given under the direct control of spirits; one is a prison, the other is death. I give my sittings, *not* as a 'mental phenomenon,' but as a trance-medium, under the direct control of spirits. If I am arrested, I shall only be another martyr for the truth, and if you get twenty more souls in bondage you will alter the law; should *I* be one of those who will help to do it, I shall count myself a happy man."

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*Note. Henry Slade's offer to Ray Lankester:—*

"DEAR SIR,—Dr. Slade having in some measure recovered from his very severe illness, and his engagement at St. Petersburg having been postponed (by desire of his friends there) till the autumn, desires me to make the following offer:—

"He is willing to return to London for the express and sole purpose of satisfying you that the slate-writing occurring in his presence is in no way produced by any trickery of his. For this purpose he will come to your house, unaccompanied by anyone, and will sit with you at your own table, using your

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own slate and pencil; or if you prefer to come to his room it will suit him as well.

"In the event of any arrangement being agreed upon, Slade would prefer that the matter should be kept strictly private.

"As he can never guarantee results, you shall give him as many as six trials, and more if it shall be deemed advisable.

"And you shall be put to no charge or expense whatever.

"You on your part shall undertake that during the period of the sittings, and for one week afterwards, you will neither take nor cause to be taken, nor countenance legal proceedings against him or me.

"That, if in the end you are satisfied that the slate-writing is produced otherwise than by trickery, you shall abstain altogether from further proceedings against us, and suffer us to remain in England, if we choose to do so, unmolested by you.

"If, on the other hand, you are not satisfied, you shall be at liberty to proceed against us, after the expiration of one week from the conclusion of the six or more experiments, if we are still in England. You will observe that Slade is willing to go to you without witnesses of his own, and to trust entirely to your honour and good faith.

"Conscience of his own innocence, he has no malice against you for the past. He believes that you were very naturally deceived by appearances, which to one who had not previously verified the phenomena under more satisfactory conditions, may well have seemed suspicious.

"Should we not hear from you within ten days from this date, Slade will conclude that you have declined his offer.

"I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

"J. SIMMONS."

"37, Spui Straat, The Hague, May 7th, 1877."

*To this no reply was vouchsafed.*

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## CHAPTER V.

### WINONA AND SPIRIT IDENTITY.

"Ah! Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be!"

WHAT the poet dreamed of becomes a realised fact in the presence of our seer. He *does* behold the "souls we loved"—and they do indeed tell us through his lips "what and where they be." Thrice blessed power of vision! Who—if they did but know it as some do—would not hasten to spend an hour—short though it might be—in the company of him who sees what we would give all we possess to look upon—the well-remembered forms and faces of those who were once with us in the mortal form, and who do all they can to let us know that they live and love us still? That this *is* "possible," let these chapters declare.

"To be able," says a journal noted for its antagonism to spiritualism, in an article on Galton's psychological experiments, "at all times to recall that dead face vividly, and with the passing changes we knew so well sweeping over it like clouds of a summer day over the sea, or wind over the fields of corn—what would most people not give?" Yet this refers to a mere effort of imagination, exercised by a person recalling the form of one he well remembers. Change it into a living vision seen by a stranger, who describes it to the life, who delivers messages understood by

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you and not by him, who gives you proof that not a vision, but an intelligent being stands by your side, one who remembers you and incidents of the past, one who reads your thoughts and knows the innermost events of your life, —and that wish is once more answered by a *fact*. It is my desire both to make it known and to explain it.

Winona is the gentle spirit who entrances her medium, and utters the messages of the anxious crowd who stand around her, and who are eager to give the smallest word of affection, or token of identity, to their friends on earth. And who is Winona? She is the most faithful spirit-friend and guardian that a human being could possess, and one of the first spirits who manifested themselves to William Fletcher. She came to him just after his visit to Maine, and soon obtained the confidence which he has, from that time to this, placed in her fidelity and truthfulness. It was a pleasant change, also, from the brief companionship of a spirit called "Wanafa," whom he graphically described as "gossiping," and who attached herself to him for a while. She had nothing to say about the spirit-world; nothing to teach on the momentous truths of the unseen life, but spent her time in reporting everything she witnessed among the people around him, which interested her far more than it did her medium. Very different in nature and in purpose was Winona, who had returned to the life of earth after a long and peaceful rest in the other world, because her spirit was ripe for the great work to be accomplished through William Fletcher's mediumship. Her history as a mortal is a brief and pathetic one. She, also, was a martyr-spirit, and as a beautiful Indian maiden, of partly English descent, had chosen, many hundreds of years ago,

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in the cruel struggle between the white man and the child of the forest, death to captivity. She is wonderfully intelligent and observant, and often exhibits that love of poetry which seems inherent in her race, and which made Hiawatha such a fitting inspiration for a poem. "The soul climbs by its tendrils," she once wrote through my hand, and I thought, as I saw the words, that they were as beautiful as they were true.

My readers will forgive me for quoting at length the following lines, spoken through Mrs. Conant, by the mother of Winona, as they briefly embody, in simple and musical words, the touching account of her fate. They are an improvisation.

"In the sunlight, in the starlight,
In the moons of long ago—
Ere the virgin soil of Shawmut
Quivered 'neath the white man's plow;

Ere the great lakes and the rivers
Listened to the white man's song;
Ere the Father of all Waters
Bore them in his strong arms on;

On, from distant lands and wigwams,
Where the sun from slumber comes,
Where the warriors hear the war-whoop
In the voices of the drums;

Lived Winona—child of Nature!
First-born, beauteous, dark-browed maid,
At whose coming fair Metoka
Where the flowers bloom was laid,—



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Grew Winona, strong and beauteous,
Fairer than the flowers of Spring;
And the echoes of her sweet voice
Made the hills and valleys ring.

Did the red deer pass her wigwam—
Soon it quivered on the plain—
For the arrow of Winona
Never left its bow in vain!

Sixteen times the snow had fallen,
Sixteen times the sun grew dim,
Since the warriors and the maidens
Sung Metoka's funeral hymn.

Then the strange voice of the white man
Rung through all our hunting grounds;
And their swift feet never faltered
When they neared our sacred mounds.

All our game their long guns hunted,
Quickly making it their own,
Heeding not the maiden's sighing,
Fearing not the warrior's frown.

Then the voice of Wanandago
Fell in accents soft and low,
Asking, would the fair Winona
To the land of sunlight go?*

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* At the rising of the sun, after the council had been held all night, it was the custom to call the fairest of the tribe, and give her the right to choose between death at the hands of her nearest of kin or the risk of being captured and enslaved by the conquering tribe. Her decision was believed to be the voice of the Great Spirit, from which there was no appeal. Winona was the first-born of the house of Wanandago, who was at the time sachem of the tribe.

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'Quick the answer came, like shadows
Filling all his soul with night—
'I will go, O mighty sachem,
Where the sky is always bright ;

Where our hunting-grounds are greater ;
Where the water's always clear ;
Where the spirits of our fathers
Chant the red man's hymn of cheer ! '

'Soon the warriors and the maidens
Sing again their funeral song ;
For the spirit of Winona
To the land of light was born !

But to-night she comes to greet you,
Comes in meekness, comes in love ;
And with gentle hands would lead you
To that land of light above ;

Where no white man robs the Indian,
Where no more the sun grows dim ;
Where the warriors and the maidens
Chant no more the funeral hymn ;

In that land where stars are brighter,
Where the moonbeams softly fall,
And the great Manito's blessing,
Like the sunlight's over all ;

There the Indian holds his council,
And his thoughts grow great and strong—
As the angels teach forgiveness
For the white man's fearful wrong.



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Here his tomahawk and arrows
Rest beneath your wigwams grand;
There his soul drinks in the wisdom
Of the glorious spirit-land!

Fare you well, ye pale-faced mortals,
Till in council you shall stand,
Face to face with fair Winona,
In the Indian's Morning Land."

It is no fiction which speaks of the "fair Winona." Those who have the privilege of seeing her describe her as resembling a Spanish girl, with large dark eyes, and possessing a beautiful and intelligent countenance. She often wears a sort of Egyptian costume, and has several times materialised in it, presenting a very graceful appearance to the beholders. It is not often, however, that her friends are thus favoured, as Winona reserves her strength for her special work, which she conducts with the tact and foresight, and those wonderful perceptive powers, which have rendered her own and her medium's name household words among a large circle of people. When Winona first associated herself with William Fletcher she could hardly speak English, and spent many hours in merely acquiring the power of manifesting herself through him by working in beads, and patiently learning many of the phases of modern life on earth which were new to her. When his first troubles overshadowed him like a heavy cloud, it was Winona's voice which cheered him, and inspired him with courage for his work.

"Trust in me," she said, "and I will prove to you of how much more value is a spirit-friend than an earthly one." And she has kept her word.

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What a beautiful law it is which gives a spirit power to speak to ignorant mortals through the organism of a human being, at a time when to do so directly is as yet, except under special and rare conditions, an impossibility! One can talk to this gentle spirit like a friend, and like a friend, too, who will do her best to comfort every suffering heart she sees before her. For Winona beholds the inner life, and can tell what men and women are better than they can understand themselves. Surely this great and good power should teach every Pharisee who denounces spirit-control a lesson which should make him humble, and willing to study and to learn fresh truths! No learned divine of the past has been permitted to teach and to advise on some of the most momentous questions connected with our age,—no venerable prelate, or author of elaborate theological commentaries or treatises known to history,—but the "child of Nature,"—the Indian maiden,—who is nearer to the Christ she never knew on earth than many a so-called Christian who repeats the formularies of the church. We are taught, and we must learn, that the Indian is as much God's child as any countryman of ours! One hour in the presence of Winona gives our world a truth for which it might ask the bench of bishops in vain, and which is of more value to man than all the synods and convocations which have ever been called together. Like her medium, she has no creed, only the Christ-like love of doing good and making truth known,—and if you ask them of their faith they would both simply answer in the noble words which have appealed to every liberty-loving soul — "The whole world is my country, and to do good my only religion."

I pass on from herself to her work. The evidence of

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spirit-influence given through William Fletcher's mediumship ranges from ordinary clairvoyance* to the most perfect proofs of spirit-identity, and those proofs are generally of such a personal and often sacred character that I have experienced no little difficulty in collecting the comparatively small amount of evidence given in this and the following chapter. It was my design to record no facts to which both names and addresses were not appended, but in the majority of instances I was compelled to give up the idea, or to omit a selection of some very interesting incidents, of the truth of which I was sufficiently assured myself. It has been well observed by a well-known and very able writer on spiritualism,† that "those who live as in a risen life, in the sacred consciousness of intercourse with their departed friends, are impatient of being interviewed by some pragmatic person, or even by some very earnest but incompetent investigator, and being forced to produce evidence which wrings their very inmost souls for the satisfaction of a man for whose convictions *pro* or *con*, they care, except on abstract principles of universal philanthropy, extremely little, and as a rule, this evidence is not given."

We have seen how severe was the opposition to spiritualism at the time William Fletcher arrived in London, and how very small appeared his chances of success. It is only due to him and to his unwearied spirit-

* A good account of his clairvoyance in the ordinary sense is given by the Hon. Percy Wyndham, M.P., in the *Spiritualist* of May 21st, 1880. I do not quote from it, as it contains none of the evidence of spirit-existence which I desire to place before the reader.

† M.A. (Oxon.)

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counsellor, Winona, to allow that the gifts and the judgment of both must have been of no common order to win such attention, and excite such interest at a period when spiritual truth was an object of public ridicule. The series of séances given to the Dalston Association were openly acknowledged by it, so satisfactory were the results to the members, and in a short time our medium was welcomed among the most influential persons in English society, being received at the different embassies, and giving to a large circle of inquirers those personal proofs of spirit-existence which are invaluable as an aid to the acceptance of the great principles of the religion of Spiritualism.

At that time he occupied a position socially and professionally which had been attained by no other medium in England, and articles about him appeared in the *University Magazine*, *Whitehall Review*, *Life*, *Scientific and Literary Review*, *St. Luke*, as well as many notices in various journals, including *The Troubadour*, *Law Times*, &c. These may be taken as indications of a power which has been making itself silently felt throughout a large section of society, but which, as I have already explained, cannot be so openly recognised as we should desire.

A very curious feature in cases of direct spirit-control, where Winona does not act as the agent, is the impression left on the organism of the medium by the spirit. As a rule, it would be impossible to permit these sensations to be experienced by him with any regard to his health and safety, and it is rarely, and only under certain conditions, that Winona yields up her peculiar office as the agent in conveying messages from the spirit-friends of sitters. But the instances I name are undoubtedly valuable

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in point of evidence. I will give one or two instances of this law. A lady came to William Fletcher when he was in the United States, who was entirely unknown to him. On passing into the trance condition a spirit spoke through him, who addressed her by name. It was the spirit of a relation, and a suicide, who expressed deep regret at his rash act, and confessed that he had *not*, by this method, got out of his trouble. Both capital punishment and suicide will cease as soon as the facts of spiritualism are understood, as it will be recognised how useless it is for a criminal, or a person in anxiety or distress to exchange one evil condition for another. After the interview was over, William Fletcher could hardly breathe, and his neck swelled to such an extent that he was obliged to have it bandaged. On several occasions, when controlled by spirits who were blind and deaf in the earth-life, his sight and hearing have been greatly affected for some time afterwards. It seems that spirits, in again entering a mortal body, take on at first the various phases of their last condition on earth, be it sickness, depression, or bodily infirmity, and that these powerfully affect the medium. Even Winona, I found, cannot endure the closing scene of her earthly life alluded to while speaking through her medium, and I decided, for her sake, never to mention it again, although I was anxious to hear her experiences in her own words of her brief and tragic death-scene, and first consciousness of awakening life in the spirit-world.

A striking instance of the operation of this law is given by Mr. Thomas Blyton, honorary secretary to the Dalston Association of Inquirers into Spiritualism, in an account

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which was published in the *Spiritualist* of June 1st, 1877,* and which he has privately corroborated in every respect. He says: "The medium at last appeared to be released from the control of Winona, who said that a spirit known to me would speak for himself. Mr. Fletcher's body was then convulsed in a painful manner; he exhibited symptoms of choking and vomiting; placed one of his hands across his chest, and held out the other hand towards me in a beseeching manner. On taking hold of the medium's hand, and sitting beside him, the words came—'It is I! Charley! I have been trying to speak to you here before, but have been unable to do so until now. Tell them at home I am often near them, and will try to impress them as to the best course to follow; they must keep together at present, as otherwise it will not be for their benefit. Tell Polly it is well with me, although it was hard to pass over.' More was said to me in an earnest and impressive manner, the control stating that it was 'while playing cricket he sustained the injury, from which he at length was freed, by passing away from earth-life.' The nature of the communication thus made was amply sufficient to point towards the identity of my wife's brother, Charles Bear, who departed from earth-life in April last from the effects of a ruptured blood-vessel; the injury was inflicted while he was playing cricket. The symptoms exhibited by the medium, when first passing under the influence of this spirit, were similar to those

* This journal, which at one time was respectably conducted, but subsequently became little more than an organ of attack on the Fletchers, has ceased to exist. and has been replaced by *Light*, the best representative weekly of spiritualism which has yet appeared in England.

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to which my brother-in-law eventually succumbed. I was also correctly informed of sundry particulars as to his surroundings during his last illness. The statements, of a private family nature, were true in every respect."

The proofs given, however, in this way, are as a rule, not permitted to overtax either medium or spirits.

I have in my possession a letter from a literary gentleman describing an interview with William Fletcher, which though it differs, probably, very little from hundreds of other similar proofs of clairvoyance and spirit-identity presented through his mediumship, I give because the statements have been made to me personally, and their value is therefore enhanced. He says: "Winona told me there was the spirit of a lady near me, who gave the initial W., and after pressing her for the name, she slowly spelt it out. I was, however, anxious for some further proof of the identity of the spirit, and asked a few questions, which were answered satisfactorily. Knowing, however, that the lady left her husband upon earth, whom I had not seen for years and thought had joined her, I said, 'Of course you have met your husband in spirit-life,' to which she replied, 'No; he is upon earth.' This I have since found to be correct. After this, Winona said she saw another spirit near me, who gave the initial T., and after pressing her for the name, she gave in addition the last two letters, and said she could read no more. Presently, however, she gave the name in full, 'Theresa.' This was a relation who died some years since, and who evinced sufficient knowledge of family matters to prove her identity. Perhaps one of the most convincing proofs to my mind was a sitting when Winona told me she had been to my home and described persons and things in

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proof of the visit. I think it necessary to mention that Mr. Fletcher knew nothing of me during the whole time of these interviews, that he was not in communication with any friend of mine, and that our conversation before and after the trance was not of a nature to yield him any information."

In a letter in the *Spiritualist* of June 15th, 1877, signed Elizabeth Brewerton, a somewhat similar testimony is given, from which I will quote. "I was quite a stranger to the medium, and having made no appointment, was puzzled when he said that an hour had been reserved for me, but on Winona's taking control, it was explained that one of my spirit-friends had preceded me and secured the interview. She then spelt out his name, described the members of my family, gave the name in full of a sister-in-law of mine, who she stated was a medium, and added so many particulars that I exclaimed, 'Winona, you seem to know as much about me as I do myself! She then described the spirit of a young relation, not long passed away, as standing near me, giving both Christian and surname, and dwelt on the blow it had been to his father, as he had just reached his majority, and great things had been hoped of him. He then showed Winona a ring on his hand, which to me was a convincing test, as it reminded me of a promise I had made him in his last illness. His spirit-mother was described as being close to him, and the full name of a relation of his own was given." This has been privately corroborated by Miss Brewerton, who adds, "I attended Mr. Fletcher's service at Steinway Hall, one Sunday evening, about six or seven weeks ago, when I received a long message through the entranced medium from the young relation referred to, the

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whole of which treated of subjects known only to members of the family. I may add that the ring shown as a test, has since been constantly seen by clairvoyant friends, and also that Winona has on several occasions fulfilled a promise she made me of visiting a small circle at which I frequently sat, to the other members of which she was quite unknown."

A letter I received from the Rev. W. R. Tomlinson, in which he expresses deep interest in the wonderful insight possessed by Winona, fully testifies to the accuracy of a brief article written by him in the *Spiritualist* of July 27th, 1877. In describing an interview with Mr. Fletcher, he states: "Soon Mr. Fletcher (Winona) said, 'I see another relation of yours. He seems suddenly snatched away from all his friends by violence. I do not see this where you are, but in a foreign country far away. It must have been a hot country, for I feel so warm.' Then he added: 'How very strange! The spirit is all dripping with water. How is that? I can't make it out.' 'Give me more tests,' I replied. I felt I did not want them, but asked nevertheless. The medium then took my left hand, and opening out the palm wrote, with the index finger of his right hand, several times over, the word 'Nicholas,' always finishing by dotting the 'i.' . . The medium explained that this was the spirit of my brother Nicholas, who was killed on the spot in May, 1842, at Chapoo, in the Chinese war of that period, but whose body was taken from the battlefield on board one of Her Majesty's ships to be committed to the deep with funeral honours. The spirit of this brother has been more, apparently, about me now for some time than any other; not, Mr. Fletcher informed me, from any

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especial brotherly affection that existed between us during his life, but because I attract him now more than other living members of my family, for the reason that he knows I would not desire to repulse him as a spirit." Little do ignorant persons realise how cruelly they wound the feelings of some of those spirit-friends who would give the world to announce their presence even by the smallest sign, through their antipathy to the fresh light and knowledge given to us in the facts of spiritualism !

Our medium witnesses much that is amusing, as well as a good deal of the tragic side of life and human nature, and to ask him for some of his experiences is to spend a very pleasant and entertaining hour. Shortly after he came to London a man came to him, whom I will call Mr. A., and appointed an interview. He seemed of a very sceptical turn of mind, and, not satisfied with the appearance of the sitting-room, he proceeded to open a door and to inspect William Fletcher's dressing-room. There he beheld a variety of hats, such as travellers usually collect in the course of a long tour, and they inspired him with the brilliant idea that they belonged to different people Mr. Fletcher "employed to listen, to find out *about his affairs.*" Not content with this, he began to open a wardrobe door, and to examine Mrs. Fletcher's dresses, and was proceeding to peep under the bed when our medium naturally remonstrated against these eccentric proceedings. The séance then at last took place, and Winona, with her usual tact, confined herself to saying to him, "I can tell you nothing except that you are in great danger."

Meanwhile another person arrived, a Mr. B., a merchant, who had been losing a good deal of money, and who desired

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to make inquiries concerning it. During the trance Winona said, "The man you seek for is in this house, and you will have to be very quick, or you will lose him." The sceptical person was, in truth, the dishonest clerk, who was in dread of meeting his employer in the presence of the medium, through whom he justly suspected the truth might be revealed.

Many have been the curious instances of conviction forced upon prejudiced and bigoted persons, to whom the very name of "medium" was enough to excite a torrent of epithets of anything but a polite character, and these, perhaps, are the highest tributes which have ever been paid to the power of William Fletcher, who, fortunately for his cause, has not been easily moved by either ordinary praise or blame.

One day he received a letter from an irate gentleman whose wife had interviewed him, telling him that unless the fee was returned at once, an action would be brought against him. William Fletcher was completely ignorant as to who the persons were, and had no recollection whatever of the incidents mentioned; but he replied to the effect that his correspondent might do anything he liked, that he had no knowledge of what was spoken through him in the trance condition, and that he should not be deterred by any threats from a course he conceived to be just and right. Another letter arrived, in which the private reasons for this attack became apparent, as the husband and wife were not on the best of terms, and the communication given to the latter had turned upon that very delicate question. The wife had been advised to return to her husband for the children's sake, the cheering information having been added

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that "the present state of things would not always last, and that she would be happier." Her only idea of happiness was in the death of her husband, and she had interpreted the prophecy in that way, with the unfortunate result to our medium which we have seen. For some time afterwards, wherever William Fletcher went he was annoyed by the presence of a detective, whom he soon observed to be such from the fact that the same face was to be seen at the theatre, in the street, and outside places he frequented. Suddenly, however, it occurred to this violent opponent of spiritualism to appoint an interview with our medium himself, without letting him know who he was, or any of his friends what he meant to do. He was received, and the result was so satisfactory that his objections were entirely removed, and he now commenced a series of investigations in his own home, and one of his own children became developed as a medium. Thus happily ended for all concerned one of those disagreeable incidents which modern seers must expect to experience till the facts they teach are understood.

It has not been the only one. On a similar occasion he replied to a threatening letter thus:—

"SIR,—I *am* a spirit-medium. Spirits *do* communicate through me; and I mean to let them do so as long as I live.—Yours truly,

"J. W. FLETCHER."

Perhaps those few firm words appealed to the better nature of his correspondent. At all events he heard no more.

However willing both spirits and mediums are to

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confine their labours to the higher truths, and to give any such proofs of the existence of the spirit-world as are calculated to elevate the mind, a large class of persons use such a gift as that possessed by William Fletcher for purely selfish ends. They go to "inquire of the seer," not in the receptive and confiding spirit of David and the kings of old,* but to carp, criticise, dictate, and pervert to lower uses what has been intended for the highest. Winona has often expressed her regret at the foolish questions asked of her, which she answers with an amount of charity and patience for which it would be vain to look in a human being. Some very caustic remarks were made in the course of a lecture on *Objections to Spiritualism* by the controlling spirit, who spoke out plainly on the subject. "'No communications of any importance!'—again we say—when you can see every day of the week those whose lives have been blessed and redeemed from things which crushed them, through the power of spiritualism! How do you solicit information of importance? How is it that the majority of people address the spirit-world? Shall we tell you? In many instances the investigator of spiritual phenomena goes into the séance-room with his mind already pledged to his own opinion; and the first questions the spirit is assailed with are probably—'What is your name? Where did you die? What was the colour of your eyes? Was your hair dark or light? Were you old or young? Where did I buy my new umbrella? How many shillings have I in my pocket, and what is the date upon each one? Where is the pocket-knife I lost?" and so on.

* 1 Sam. ix. 9; 2 Sam. xxiv. 11; 1 Chron. xxv. 5, &c.

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These and other questions of equally profound importance greet the spirit-world, and whose is the fault if valuable information be not given? Did the spirit fail to give it owing to your lack of demand for anything higher, or because it did not possess the power? These are two questions which each investigator had best earnestly think about before pronouncing his decided opinion on the subject. The spirit-world always gives to mortals just what mortals seek. As water finds its own level, so does human intelligence; and when you enter the séance-room with a desire for good, and allow the free action of the spirits present, you will receive spiritual communications of value and assistance for yourself."

Even under the present conditions, however, advice and assistance of an invaluable kind have been given to persons who could have obtained such aid from no human being, and who recognise with gratitude the more individual uses of spiritual truths.

Some persons have gone to William Fletcher in disguise, and found that there are presences around them to whom their disguise is more flimsy than a muslin veil would be to us. One such instance is given in the article in *Life*. "Our Merlin of Steinway Hall, tells a story of an attempt to play upon him a practical joke, which says something for his capacity to discriminate between Adonis and Phyllis, quite irrespective of its alleged mediumistic certitude. A person, attired in widow's weeds, called upon him, and to judge by the profuse application of a *mouchoir*, seemed to be overwhelmed with affliction. The object of the visit was to ascertain whether, by means of divination, Mr. Fletcher would state where a missing will could be discovered, the



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person affirming that, owing to the loss of this document, ruin had befallen an orphaned family. After requesting the said person to wait till the spirit moved him, Mr. Fletcher went off into a trance, and then delivered himself oracularly thus : ' I see a fair young man, and a lady and gentleman standing near him. Now they are laughing. Before them is a pile of black clothing. Now they are putting the black clothes upon the fair young man, and now a wig upon his head. Now they cover his head with a white crape bonnet and a long veil. The young man is evidently playing a part. They ring for the servant, and order the carriage. Now they put him in the carriage, still laughing. The carriage drives away with the young man in it. It stops at the door. *You* are the young man.' "

And a similar testimony to Winona's sagacity is given in the *Spiritualist* of May 2nd, 1879, signed " Ellen Crump," who says : "A few days ago I had a curious test-sitting with Mr. J. W. Fletcher, which I think will be interesting to others. I sat with him for the first time about eighteen months ago. I was then a perfect stranger to him, but he told me some interesting truths about my life, and gave me some useful medical advice. Since then I have become slightly acquainted with him personally, and being particularly anxious to obtain some plain information and advice from his controlling spirit, Winona, untinged by any possible influence which his personal knowledge of me might give to her communications, and also to test his powers, I wrote from an address unknown to him, in a strange hand, under a feigned name, to ask for an appointment on Saturday, after six, and received one line in reply, appointing eight o'clock. That he had no suspicion I was

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his sitter for Saturday, I am quite sure. On the eventful evening I entered the séance room, with a beating heart, fearing detection, though I had a thick crape veil on over two thinner ones, and sat with my back to the low-burning light, and only bowed silently when Mr. Fletcher entered, for fear my voice even should betray me. I need not have taken half so much trouble. Mr. Fletcher had had so many strangers sitting with him that he was absolutely incurious, even rather listless and indifferent, and decidedly tired, and simply requested me with distant politeness to remove my glove, and in a few minutes was in the land of shadows, and Winona's pleasant voice asked if she should tell me what she saw. After listening quietly to her account of my general life, which was very accurate, I asked what I thought a dexterous question; she paused a moment before replying, and then said, naïvely, 'Do you think that I don't know you?' I replied that I was not sure; but she said, very decidedly, 'I know you quite well, and however many veils you put on I should always know you; I can see the influences around you, very plainly.' I asked if her medium knew me. 'Oh no,' she said, 'he does not care; he was not thinking about it,' and this must have been true, for when, at the close of our sitting, Mr. Fletcher returned and resumed his polite and distant manner, I asked him if he had any notion who I was, but he had not the least idea; and when I raised my veil his genuine laugh of amusement and exclamation proved how entirely he had been in the dark. I may add that Winona gave me some clear-headed advice, and shewed, without any explanation from me, a most intimate acquaintance with the troubles and complications surrounding me."



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## CHAPTER VI.

### SPIRIT IDENTITY (*Continued*).

THIS important question of the *identity* of communicating spirits, while it renders William Fletcher's mediumship unusually valuable to inquirers, forms also an obstacle to the publication of those facts most calculated to break down every kind of opposition. Even in the published notices of his work, the facts are often imperfectly given, or altogether suppressed. I quote an instance recorded in the *Spiritualist* of July 13th, 1877, soon after his arrival in England.

"A few days ago, a séance was held at the house of Mrs. Makdougall Gregory, 21, Green Street, Grosvenor Square, at which Mr. J. W. Fletcher, the trance-medium, told a lady present all the details of certain private and important business she had transacted at her lawyer's a few hours previously. The details were so exactly given, and the communicating spirits so precisely described, that were we to print the details the whole case would be recognised by those interested." Again, in the same journal of October 12th, 1877: "Mrs. FitzGerald, of 44, Eastbourne Terrace, Hyde Park, writes that, at a recent séance with Mr. Fletcher, much evidence of spirit-identity was given to persons unknown to the medium, but that the facts themselves are of such a private nature that she cannot publish them."

Mrs. Louisa Andrews, in a letter to the *Spiritualist* of February 28th, 1879, also dwells upon this point. 'Mr. Fletcher," she writes, "might have been acquainted with me

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for years, and have seen little or nothing of certain things which were spoken of through his lips, as if the inner life, hidden behind a veil which even friendship might not lift, were as familiar to him as household words. . . . Those things which carry conviction with startling force to one's mind and heart, are just those which cannot be talked about."

However much we may regret that a mass of evidence is thus lost to the world, its character is undoubtedly of a kind to enable us to endorse the opinion expressed by Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, that an interview with Mr. Fletcher "carries to the mind a fuller conviction of the reality of spirit-life than all the physical phenomena he had ever witnessed."

Of Winona's remarkable powers of prevision there are numberless instances. Mrs. FitzGerald alludes to them in a very interesting paper, entitled "Experiences in the Home Circle," published in the *Spiritualist* of November 22nd, 1878. Remarking upon the character of William Fletcher's mediumship, she says: "He (Winona) gave names, and tests and messages, and foretold events of which I was then entirely ignorant. . . . and directed me in a course I was to pursue, the very reverse of what I intended, and the result was as he foretold."

Some excellent proofs of this peculiar power, which seems to be a natural faculty of the disembodied spirit, are given in an excellent article in the *University Magazine* of June, 1879, entitled "The Preternatural in the Present Day." I shall make no apology for quoting them at length, and thus obtaining for the facts, probably, a more permanent record even than a well-known monthly periodical can bestow.

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"A certain Dr. M., being in great distress, went to ask concerning his future.

"The clairvoyant's (Mr. Fletcher's) answer was this: 'I see no light upon your life until the first part of next year, and then I see that a small legacy is left you; and directly following that, you obtain an appointment, which, although you will accept it, you will not keep, as it will be most disagreeable to you. Then there is another break, and after that an appointment of great importance comes to you, which you will retain for life. The legacy is not from anyone you know.'

"On taking up the *Times* near the end of the year, Dr. M. saw an advertisement of the next of kin of his name. He at once remembered the prophecy, and applied to proper quarters. His claim was proved, and a small legacy was received by him. It came from a distant branch of the family. In the office, at the time he was receiving this legacy, two gentlemen were talking; one of them was saying that he desired to obtain a consulting physician for his establishment in Ireland. Dr. M., overhearing the conversation, introduced himself, presented his credentials and references, and in less than a week's time had obtained the position, where he remained but a short time; for, finding the place disagreeable and unfitted for a permanent residence, he soon left it. Then for a while he remained without occupation, and at last wrote to his clairvoyant asking him for another prediction. The reply was simply a repetition of the end of the former prediction. Since then, Dr. M. has entered upon another appointment, which he still holds; and it naturally remains to be seen whether

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the prophecy is to be entirely fulfilled by his remaining in it to the end of his life."

"A very recent incident may serve to suggest to those who have not regarded the matter in this light, to what immediate uses these strange powers might be put. The above-named seer, on a recent occasion, was thrown into a mesmeric sleep, when with some persons who were deeply interested in the fate of Colonel Pearson and of members of their own family who were with him in Zululand. The operator therefore asked the clairvoyant :—

"'Can you travel for me?'

"'Yes.'

"'Then will you go to Colonel Pearson? Do you see him?'

"'Yes.'

"'Is he relieved?'

"'Oh, yes,' was the reply, listened to by those around with an anxiety which it is easy to understand. 'They are all alive and safe.'

"How long have they been relieved?'

"Only a short time. The news is on the way. It is all right.'

"The news of Colonel Pearson's relief, which only took place on the day before this vision, was duly received through the orthodox channels."

"The clairvoyant sees the past and the future of the person whose atmosphere he touches, with more or less distinctness. Some instances of this faculty are very curious. The late Duke of N. went to the noted clairvoyant to inquire into his future. The clairvoyant fully described the duke's past life, and then said: 'I see

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nothing in the future for you; your future is a complete blank; it is a page upon which no word is written.' On two occasions these words were repeated to him, and the whole thing was looked upon by the Duke of N. and his friends, among whom he talked a great deal about it, as a failure. But his sudden death in less than three weeks afterwards perhaps explains the vision."

With regard to the last case, William Fletcher states in a conversation with the author of his "Portrait in Words" in the *Whitehall Review* of September 13th, 1879, that he saw the spirit of the duke at the moment of his transition.

"The very moment the Duke of N. died he was in this room. I remarked to my wife subsequently that I had had a call from the duke. I had not at the moment the least idea that the apparition was visionary. She told me, however, that no one had entered the house. 'Then,' I said, 'he is gone,' and I made a note of the precise hour. The next day I read an account of his sudden death in the papers, and the hour of his death tallied with that of his appearance to me."

One cannot help feeling that one of the keenest trials in the life of a man thus accustomed to the companionship of spirits, and every kind of proof of their reality and identity, must be to listen with anything like patience to the crude theories and the ignorant opposition in which more material natures delight. Wherever he goes, however, the subject of spiritualism is one hardly likely to escape discussion, and its principal representative in England quietly held his own.

"What is required to become a spiritualist?" asked a sceptical gentleman of him one evening.

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" Brains," replied William Fletcher.

I think he was right. It has been said that " people are converted by meditation, never by discussion." Most true. And some persons are never converted, because they never meditate. Their prejudices exclude the possibility.

In a letter entitled "Prophetic Clairvoyance," published in *Spiritual Notes*, of January, 1880, and signed " Janet E. Rees," excellent testimony is also given with regard to this insight into the future. The writer says she " was very deeply predecided against so-called clairvoyance " . . . . and after describing what Winona announced, she adds : " I decided that it was within the bounds of possibility for Mr. Fletcher to have gained his accurate knowledge of my character and mind from my expression, and that the rest of the communication was merely prophetic guess-work. Prophetic it certainly was ; guess-work it could hardly have been. One by one every incident then foretold me has come to pass, and to my great surprise I find myself, after a lapse of six months, in the exact position which ' Winona ' foretold to me, and which at the time I considered utterly and ridiculously impossible. I took notes of what had passed directly I left Mr. Fletcher's house, and sealed up the paper. The other day I opened the packet, and found that, even to minute details, which I had entirely forgotten, the prophecy had been fulfilled."

Not a few exist who owe their lives to his mediumship. " Among his friends in America," writes the author of the article in *Life*, of October 4th, 1879, " may be mentioned Mr. Henry Wilson, late Vice-President of the United States, who professed his infinite gratitude for his mediumship in having warned him not to undertake a journey in a

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particular train, which met with an accident, the message purporting to come from the spirit of his wife."

To this may be added a remarkable case given in the *University Magazine.*

"A clergyman living in the town of W. was in the greatest distress, for his two children were dying. They had been vaccinated with poisonous virus; something like mortification had set in, and at last the doctors told the unhappy father that there was no hope, the boys must die, and it was useless to disguise from him the fact any longer.

"'Let us go to a clairvoyant!' said the mother, looking around for some last chance.

"'We may as well, now,' agreed the father, 'for as the doctors say the children must die, he can do no harm!'

"Encouraged by this mode of reasoning, the clergyman went to find the seer. It was late in the evening, and he found the object of his quest just starting for another town where he was engaged to lecture on the following day. He consequently refused to see the clergyman, and when he heard that it was to use his clairvoyance that the strange visitor desired to see him, he altogether declined, as at that time he was not in the habit of giving these clairvoyant interviews. The clergyman, however, repeated his entreaty, saying, 'It is a matter of life and death, and for the love of heaven I beg you not to refuse me, for if you do, my last hope is gone.' This agonised appeal brought a reluctant consent, and sitting down, the visionary soon passed into the state of *ecstatis*, and began to describe what he saw. He said: 'I see two little boys, one much younger than the other, who seem to have been poisoned. They are

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suffering intense agony. If things continue as they are now, they cannot live more than a few hours longer. However, if you will follow the directions which I give you, they will be quite recovered in the course of a few weeks. The younger one, to-morrow, will be quite unconscious for some time; you will think him dead. But, if he is treated with care, and this prescription which I now give you is followed, the effects of this unconsciousness will be quite overcome and he will be restored.' Then a long and detailed account was given of the medicines and method of treatment, which was to extend over five weeks. It was then stated that at the end of that time the children would have quite recovered. The lecturer left by the evening train to fulfil his engagements, and did not return to the town in which the clergyman lived for nearly two months, and the matter had quite passed out of his mind. But the day after his return he was reminded of it by seeing the clergyman and his wife approaching the house, and while he was wondering how their children were (their very existence being only recalled to his mind by seeing the father and mother), the gentleman and his wife were shewn into the room, and quite a scene ensued, for they were completely overcome by agitation in speaking of the blessing which had come to them through his powers; for, as they said, their children had been raised from the grave."

When one of our clerical opponents can do as much as this for the suffering in mind or body, we shall be ready to listen to their superior claims to speak with authority upon what will inevitably become the world's religion.

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I cannot forbear, in this chapter, quoting at length an instance of William Fletcher's mediumship from the same source, because of the remarkable nature of the evidence.

"Here is a ghost story which has a delightful old-world air about it, and yet it concerned a lady now living in Belgravia. She dreamed a very wonderful dream, in which she heard a voice say, 'Go to Fletcher.' She could not understand this, as she knew no one called Fletcher; and she related her dream and spoke of her perplexity about it to several persons, until at last a friend to whom she was telling the story, said, 'There is someone called Fletcher who is a seer, or clairvoyant.' She then went to call upon this clairvoyant, and made an appointment for him to come to her house.

"Mr. Fletcher went accordingly, and was admitted to the house by a strange-looking servant, who eyed him in a very puzzled manner. He was shewn into the dining-room, which was dimly lighted, and as he went in, he noticed that an old gentleman was sitting in the room at a writing-desk busy with some papers: he was dressed as a clergyman. Mr. Fletcher excused himself, apologising for interrupting the clergyman, who, however, paid no attention whatever, but continued to write. After Mr. Fletcher had waited some time, silently observing the old clergyman, the lady of the house, whom we will call Madame Z., came in. The clergyman retained his seat, taking no notice of her entrance. Mr. Fletcher, while speaking to her, looked round, and was startled to see that the clergyman had changed his dress, and wore the uniform of a chaplain. This so astonished him that he quite forgot the lady's presence and the words he was in the act of speaking; he

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stood stupidly gazing at the clergyman, until she said, 'What are you looking at?'

"He at first did not answer her, feeling ashamed of staring in such a way at the clergyman, who remained quietly seated at his desk. But as he continued to look at him, and grew very pale, Madame Z. again asked, 'What *do* you see?'

"He replied, 'I am only looking at that gentleman who sits at the desk writing.' As he replied to her, he noticed that Madame Z. changed colour, and began to tremble very much.

"All she said was, 'You are mistaken. There is no one sitting there.'

"But looking round again at the clergyman, he replied, 'Oh, yes, there is; he has been sitting there ever since I came in, but he *must* have left the room for a moment, as he has changed his clothes.'

"Madame Z. answered emphatically, 'There is *no one* sitting there,' and to prove her words correct she went to the chair by the desk and lifted it up, showing positively that it was empty. She was extremely agitated, and as she put down the chair she exclaimed, 'Then you have *really* seen him.' It was evident that she understood who was referred to. 'I think we will go upstairs,' she then said, and moved to leave the room; but the clergyman at once stepped before her and led the way out of the door. Mr. Fletcher, seeing him so plainly, followed him, and Madame Z. kept close behind. The clergyman went before them up the stairs and stopped at the back drawing-room door. Mr. Fletcher followed the apparition, and when it paused at the door opened it. Madame Z.,

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strangely enough, as it would seem under ordinary circumstances, followed Mr. Fletcher while he led the way in her house—a house, too, which he had never been in before. In this way they entered the drawing-room, which was dimly lit. Madame Z. was all the time trembling violently, and much agitated. They sat down by a small table, but the apparition had gone to the other end of the room, and was still standing there. He motioned to Mr. Fletcher to come over to a table by which he stood, showing by this action that he could see him. Mr. Fletcher said to Madame Z., 'May I go to him?' and went across the room. The spirit made a gesture as though he wished a large album which lay on the table opened. Mr. Fletcher obeyed him, and turned over the leaves and finally stopped at one picture to which the spirit pointed. Mr. Fletcher said to Madame Z., 'Please come to me, he has pointed to a picture and you may recognise what it means.'

"She hesitatingly complied, looking furtively at the corner in which the uncanny presence was, and as she looked down at the page of the album, exclaimed, 'Why that is the picture of my dear father, whose spirit you have seen.'

"Mr. Fletcher said, 'But it doesn't look *much* like the spirit.'

"She answered, 'Possibly not, he did not look much like it when he died. This picture was made many years ago, and he changed greatly before his death.'

"The apparition then vanished, and Mr. Fletcher, sitting down by the table, passed into a condition of trance. While in this state he spoke these words to Madame Z.: 'I cannot rest in peace, because my body is not placed in

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the ground. I wish to absolve you from the promise that you made, and to ask you to carry forward my wishes about the mausoleum, and when this is done I shall be at peace. I shall no more then walk the house, but now I am tied to it, and must remain here until my body is removed and properly buried. I do not wish to disturb you, but I cannot help it, as I am chained to the house' ; to this some words of comfort and kindness were added, which, however, only added to the agitation of Madame Z. ; and when Mr. Fletcher awakened from the abnormal sleep into which he had fallen, he found Madame Z. greatly excited. Her excitement communicated itself to him when she began to make the extraordinary explanation of the affair.

" 'No one knows, but myself,' she said, ' the fact that the body of my father has not been buried. It has been embalmed according to his wish, and it is now standing in this house in a metallic case.'

" Madame Z. went on to tell her visitor the troubles which this arrangement had brought upon her. Her house had been so disturbed by the apparition of her father, that she was unable to get any servant to remain with her in the house at night. Being deserted in this way, as soon as it was dark, by the four or five servants whom she kept, she never received visitors in the evening, which explained the curious look of the servant who admitted Mr. Fletcher. None of the servants would remain to serve the supper on the night of this extraordinary visit, and Madame and her visitor were compelled to wait upon themselves. Even her lady's maid left the house at night, and returned in the early morning, when the daylight gave her courage to wait upon her mistress.

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"From this eventful night the hauntings began to diminish, and have gradually ceased altogether. But even now, though the house has recently been entirely renovated, none of the servants can be persuaded to live there."

It is almost unnecessary to point out that William Fletcher's clairvoyance was corroborated by facts unknown to him, and which occurred entirely apart from his mediumship, and spontaneously, the witnesses being not only Madame Z., but the servants who heard the sounds and could not be persuaded to remain in the house during the night. It is one of the most complete and connected pieces of evidence of spirit-identity in every point that I am acquainted with, and I can only express my regret that private reasons prevented Madame Z. from openly identifying herself with the history she has permitted to be so far recorded, and from testifying publicly to its truth.

Two thoughtful and penetrating letters on our medium's seership have been published in the American spiritual journal, the *Banner of Light*, from the pen of the well-known author, Mrs. Florence Marryat, who has privately expressed to me her high appreciation of its character. The accounts of her interviews are of unusual interest, and well merit re-publication on this side of the Atlantic.

"Having heard," she writes, "the most marvellous reports of the clairvoyant powers of Mr. J. W. Fletcher, I determined to test them for myself, and consequently made an appointment with that gentleman at his residence in Gordon Street. For the sake of the faithless and unbelieving I must premise that I had not previously met Mr. Fletcher, except on Sunday evenings in the Steinway Hall, when I had listened to some excellent lectures from

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him in explanation of the doctrines of spiritualism. I had seen many clairvoyants before, both in public and private, and been witness to wonderful feats of skill on their part in naming and describing concealed objects, and reading print or writing when held far beyond their reach of sight. But I knew the trick of all that. I had found it out for myself, and that there was, as poor Charles Matthews used to say, 'nothing in it.' If Mr. Fletcher is going to treat me to any mental 'legerdemain' of that kind, I thought, as I made my way to Gordon Street, I shall have wasted both my time and my trouble upon him; and as I approached the house I confess I felt doubtful whether I might not be deceived against my senses by the clever gentleman whose eloquence had charmed me into wishing for a more intimate acquaintance. . . . Nothing could be further removed from one's ideas of a haunt of mystery and magic, or of the abode of a man who was forced to descend to trickery in order to gain a livelihood. In a few minutes Mr. Fletcher entered the room and saluted me with the air of a gentleman. We did not proceed to business, however, until he had taken me round his rooms and introduced me to his favourite pictures, including a portrait of the famous Sara Bernhardt, etched by herself, in the character of Mrs. Charkson, in *L'Etrangère*. When we had said as much about them as seemed good to us, we returned to the back room, and without darkening the window or adopting any precautionary means whatever, took our seats upon the *causeuse*, facing eath other, whilst Mr. Fletcher laid his left hand in mine. . . .

"Many years ago I attended a clairvoyant séance with Miss Lottie Fowler, the American medium, whose powers



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of prophecy are known to more men of science in London than would be brave enough to come forward and confess the truth. She (who was not even acquainted with my name) commenced with my birth, and mentioning dates, places, and people, narrated every incident of importance that had occurred to me up to the time I was sitting by her side. She then told truthfully all that was taking place at the moment, and read the coming events of the next three or four years in a manner which their subsequent fulfilment has rendered really marvellous. Should these lines reach her eyes, I trust she will accept my thanks for the insight she gave me to clairvoyance on that occasion, and be pleased to hear her guides were so successful. Yet had the sitting I held with Mr. Fletcher brought similar results I might not have written this account of it. It would have been convincing to me perhaps, but not to the public, for the events of my past life are no secret, and predictions of the future become interesting only on their fulfilment.

"Mr. Fletcher (Winona) perhaps guessed my thoughts, for he commenced by saying that he would not waste my time on facts that he might have gathered from the world, but would confine himself to speaking of my inner life. Thereupon, with the most astonishing astuteness, he told me of my thoughts and feelings, reading them off as though from a book. He repeated to me words and actions that had been said and done in the utmost privacy, and hundreds of miles away. He detailed the characters of my various acquaintance, shewing who were true and who were false, giving me their names, places of residence, and description. He even repeated the contents of letters lying locked up at

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my own house, and revealed to me what I should learn by one that should (and subsequently did) reach me the same evening. He detailed the motives I had had for certain actions, and what was more strange, revealed truths concerning myself which I had never recognised until they were presented to me through the medium of a perfect stranger. Every question that I asked was accurately answered, and I was repeatedly invited to draw further revelations from him. The fact being that I was struck almost dumb by what I had heard, and rendered incapable of doing anything but marvel at the wonderful gift that enabled a man not only to read every thought that had passed through my brain, but to see, as in a glass, scenes that were being enacted miles away, with the actors concerned in them, and the motives that were animating them. Mr. Fletcher read the future for me as well as the past, and the first distinct prophecy he uttered has already come, most unexpectedly, to pass. But there could be no greater astonishment for me than had been caused by his reading of myself, and I have heard my opinion echoed by several friends, who have also tested his miraculous powers. . . .

"As I wended my way homeward, and recalled the thoughts and acts which Mr. Fletcher had put into words for me, the lines from the inspired writings entered my mind, 'Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did.'"

The second letter is hardly less interesting, and written as it is by one whose long experience of the facts of spiritualism entitles her to be heard with attention, I give the greater part of it with pleasure.



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"I have been asked to comment upon Mr. Fletcher's capabilities as a speaker, and would commence by saying that his appearance on the platform, his manner, enunciation, and mode of delivery, are all calculated to attract his hearers more and more to the religion which he professes to expound. His voice is clear, simple, and unaffected; he grasps the subject he may have chosen to handle plainly and decisively, and he does not leave it until he has exhausted it. His lectures on the future condition of the spirit have been especially interesting, and opened a world of speculation for those who had never thought before. . . To meet him on the platform is to see him in his own home. He is, however, of a very cheerful temperament in domestic life (which the semi-entranced condition of the platform might lead a casual spectator to doubt), and is as ready to see a joke, or make one, as the liveliest of his friends. But he never quite loses the dreamy appearance of one who is in such constant communion with the other world, and it is difficult to lose consciousness of the spiritual atmosphere by which he is surrounded. This idea is heightened in those who have had the privilege of 'sitting' with him, because Mr. Fletcher, whilst under control, is so perfectly natural and like himself, that it is difficult to believe that another spirit is inhabiting his body and speaking through his lips. I told you in my letter of last year that I had held a séance with him of so private a nature that it was impossible to make it public. During that interview Winona made several startling prophecies concerning what was then the future, and it may interest your readers to hear that several of those prognostications have already been fulfilled, and that the rest seem likely to be.

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"Wishing to procure some further proofs of Mr. Fletcher's power before I wrote this letter to you, I prepared a different sort of test for him last week. From a drawer full of old letters I selected, *with my eyes shut*, four folded sheets of paper, and enclosed them, still without looking, in four blank envelopes, which I then sealed. I carried these envelopes to Mr. Fletcher, and requested Winona to tell me the characters of the persons by whom their contents had been written. She placed them consecutively to the medium's forehead, and as she returned them to me, one by one, I wrote down her comments on each, on the outside of its cover. On breaking the seals the character of each writer was found to have been most accurately defined, although the letters had all been written years ago, a fact which Winona immediately discovered; she also told me which of my correspondents were dead and which were living. Here, you will observe, there could have been no re-action of my own brain on that of the sensitive, as I was perfectly ignorant until I opened the envelopes by whom the letters had been sent to me.

"Two months ago I was invited to join in a certain speculation, of the advisability of which I felt uncertain. I went, therefore, to Mr. Fletcher and asked for an interview with Winona, intending to consult her on the matter. But before I had had time to mention the subject she told me that she knew what I had come for, and went on to speak of the speculation itself, of the people concerned in it, and the money it was expected to produce; and finally she explained to me how it would collapse, with the means that would bring it to an end, putting her decided veto on my having anything to do with it. I followed

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Winona's advice, and have been thankful since that I did so, as everything has turned out just as she prognosticated for me.

"It is a common thing to hear scoffers at spiritualism affirm that if they could get any useful information out of spirits they would be inclined to believe in them. We take a very low and degrading view of the science of eternity when we stop to consider how much money we can make or avoid losing by its revelations; but there are few spiritualists who have not found assistance, when they needed it, in their earthly concerns, from their friends on the other side. And I know of no medium to whom I would sooner send an unbeliever whom I wished to see convinced of the truth of spiritualism than to Mr. Fletcher. . . I think there are very few people who could sit with him and not feel their scepticism shaken, whatever they might say to the contrary.

"There is another point which I would mention, and one of the utmost importance: Mr. Fletcher preaches the religion of purity, truth, and charity, and (as far as human creatures can judge of each other), he leads a life in accordance with his doctrines." And the letter concludes with a wish that the religion of spiritualism were thus lived out by all.

I cannot close this chapter without adding my own testimony to that of others. Through the lips of William Fletcher, Winona has spoken to me words such as no mortal could have employed,—words of comfort, hope and tenderness, which from the first moment I heard them threw a ray of light over my life which I shall remember to its last hour. Of her power to give communications from

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those who have passed from this world to the other, let the following extract from a letter of mine which was published in the *Spiritualist* of September 13th, 1878, once more speak.

"In the early autumn of 1877 we had the misfortune of losing our eldest sister, and owing to a singular dream of one of my sisters, I had a strong impression to try if any communications could be obtained from her through a trustworthy medium. It was a first attempt, because though I had read much on spiritualism, I had little practical experience of it, and only selected Mr. Fletcher from the recommendation of Mr. Burns, to whom I wrote for information on this point. A visit of my sister's to London soon gave her the opportunity of having a personal interview with him, and I need scarcely say he was a complete stranger to us. The appointment was, indeed, made by telegram; the first séance took place October 10th, 1877, and another a few days afterwards. My sister C. sent me a complete record of them on the same days on which they were given, and I need hardly say how much we were impressed by the accounts sent to us. After Mr. Fletcher had been entranced, the name of my sister E., who had passed into spirit-life, was correctly given, and she was accurately described, even to a peculiar mark on her face, and to the smallness of her hands, all of which references furnished additional proofs of her identity. Of the latter—'they are my strong point,' was Winona's message, and it was a characteristic phrase. She used to wear sixes in gloves, when the sizes were made smaller than they are now; in fact, a child's size. She then described her illness most correctly through the controlling spirit, adding that

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nothing could have saved her, although the doctors did not understand it; and she wished us to know this, which I may state was a complete answer to our own troubled speculations as to whether her life might not have been spared by an earlier diagnosis of her case. Our sister said she did not know she was leaving earth; but she first became aware that she had passed through the change of death by seeing her own lifeless body when someone came into the room with a lighted candle, which, I conclude, restored her consciousness. (She had passed away at night.) She also alluded in a very striking way to a medical consultation next morning, and to her leaving her husband on earth to find herself in the arms of our father, who had been many years in spirit-life. She then told C. she was constantly with us, and that if we would hold séances at home she could communicate with us; that I was a writing medium, although not a strong one, unless I could write in trance; and also that my youngest sister was likewise a medium, but would not be developed as such for reasons which she gave, and which have since been verified. My sister E.'s husband was also mentioned by name, and she said she was aware her rooms had been kept just as they were in her life; touching messages were delivered concerning him, and her own presence with him still, as well as directions about some legal matters which she was anxious should be arranged. She pointed out the ring C. wore, which was hers, and said it was a great help, also a locket concealed from view, and she described locks of her hair we had, saying she saw them put away, exactly according to the facts. These she wished us to wear to bring her in closer *rapport* with us. The contents of a small box, which was

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securely fastened, containing hair, a double eye-glass, and old-fashioned silk purse with rings, &c., were correctly given by Winona, who, however, drew the eye-glasses, and with regard to the purse, said there was something in the box connected with money. Probably she had never seen a similar one before, and did not recognise it as a purse. Winona also gave some characteristic messages from our father; our brother was spoken of by name, and his character correctly alluded to. The name of an old servant of ours was also mentioned, her attachment to the family described; and Winona wrote my brother's name, as well as a brief message from our sister, signed with her name; another (also from the latter) to my youngest sister, addressing her by name, and signed with *two* of her names; and a third to her husband, in which his name was also given, her death mentioned, and her pleasure in seeing everything kept as before, and this was signed with *four* names—two Christian and her married name as well as surname. These papers are all in my possession. Winona also told my sister C. that she saw she was going to see a young lady who was very ill, whose Christian name she mentioned, which was perfectly correct. She said she would recover and become quite well, and the prophecy has been verified, although at the time it was considered exceedingly doubtful. My sister was most particular *not* to mention any names, and the communications were given spontaneously.

"On Mr. Fletcher's awaking from his trance, his clairvoyant power in the normal condition was made evident. In answer to the question if he could see any relations of our friends, who were waiting in the room

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below, he said, 'I see that a spirit called W. is here; he has not been in spirit-life very long, and he died a long way from here. He sends,' (here followed a message, as well as an accurate description, which I do not relate for private reasons.) All was correct. My youngest sister sent a message of inquiry, and Mr. Fletcher said he hoped to obtain a reply. Some little time afterwards it was sent to us. I must mention that we had, after this, commenced some séances at home. The reply addressed my sister by name, and the writer mentioned, with the same convincing ease, her own presence at our séances, and her unsuccessful efforts to communicate with us. The name of her husband was given; also that of a relation on earth; and a circumstance was alluded to which had prevented her brother in spirit-life from communicating with his sister; it was signed, 'Your sister, E.' At least half-a-dozen tests were given in this brief letter, and my mind was convinced and my heart comforted by the proof which had been bestowed on us of the continued existence and love of those who have indeed only 'gone before.'

"Our séances at home were continued for a brief period, which was sufficiently long, however, to partly develop me as a writing medium,—a result my mind had certainly not influenced, as I had interpreted the statement entirely in the sense of assistance by inspiration in some previous slight attempts at literary work. As soon as my surprise had subsided, and the first trying mistakes and difficulties had been got over, my father and sister, and occasionally others, were able, at all events, to write comforting and beautiful messages of such a character as a Christian man or woman might thankfully receive as an added testimony to the

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reality of the unseen world, and the truth of the words of Him whose Divine mission on earth is, I humbly conceive, as far from ended as it is but little comprehended by man.

"I now turn to my own séances with Mr. Fletcher, two of which took place in the spring of 1878. While waiting in the dining-room, Winona wrote through me, and I told him she was doing so. He said, 'She writes a large round hand,' which was precisely the writing before me, although, of course, I had known nothing about it. I regret being unable to give as many details concerning these séances as the previous ones; but while withholding many tests, on my own account and that of others, I may say that Winona mentioned three names without any assistance from me, and that she referred to family incidents and my own life in such a way as to assure me my spirit friends were communicating through her. She mentioned my mother's illness and pointed out the affected place on her medium's breast. She made many prophecies, several of which have been already verified, stated a fact in utter opposition to information we had received, and our own belief, which was subsequently corroborated, and repeated a message from my sister, who was, she said, standing close to me, which I can only say was to me a most complete demonstration of her presence."

And I will conclude with quoting also from the *Spiritualist* of May 17th, of the same year, a wonderful proof of the existence of spirits around us who see and hear and aid us, though they are themselves unseen, and which was given to me before I even saw William Fletcher.

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"It may interest others to hear of the following incident in Mr. Fletcher's mediumship. Before I came to London I wrote to him and requested that an answer from my friends might be given to me. I received in a few days a letter purporting to be from my father, in which a certain phrase used by me mentally when troubled, and which was unknown to any human being but myself, and had certainly never crossed my mind when writing my brief note to Mr. Fletcher, was mentioned as having been *overheard by my father*. It was such as could not be explained by any theory of coincidence or guess-work. Mr. Fletcher told me in a note from himself that while writing he heard a name being repeated by someone, but could not catch the message. It was the name of my sister's step-son, of whom she was very fond in earth-life, and was a most uncommon one. Mr. Fletcher never saw me till I came up to town, and there were three hundred miles between us. Have *letters* 'spheres,' with all one's life and private thoughts, and the correct names of one's friends recorded in them? Or does one's own sphere, with a similar amount of information in it, extend three hundred miles?"

Winona's separate identity from her medium is no mere probability to me; it is an every-day fact; and many have been the hours when wearied with anxieties, and tried by the inevitable but mistaken criticisms which never fail to assail those who dare to question the world's conventional forms of religion and morals, and to speak in behalf of truth and purity,—the voice, not only of Winona, but of some strong and beautiful spirit has spoken to me in words of Christ-like love and charity which inspired me to be patient, to gain courage, and to be true to that conscience

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which is God's mirror in the soul. The proofs of this separate identity, however calculated to convince others, are of a character too private to be recorded for popular use. Winona has her own ideas, and opinions, and her own estimation of those she sees, and at times they differ in a very amusing way from those of her medium. His indifference, also, to the details which surprised correspondents have related to him in many lengthy letters, went the length one day in several of these communications being committed to the flames, in my presence, after being read out. One or two had just arrived by the post. I remonstrated against such a practice, as although the letters were only intended to be marks of private appreciation, I saw at once that they contained valuable evidence. In their recipient, however, they seemed to excite little interest beyond a satisfaction that "Winona had been correct," and this never failed to please him.

Through this wonderful gift of spiritual insight, through the power of Winona to speak through his lips, William Fletcher has made many, and pleasant, and lasting friendships. His own aspect and presence seem to commend him to not a few of those with whom he comes in contact, however little he has been understood by others. Probably they possess the intuitional natures now so far from rare among us. One says: "There is something unearthly about the man"; another, that "he has evidently inherited or acquired that rarest of supremacies, the empire of the eye." The simple truth is, he is quiet and fearless, and those eyes of his look as if they had faced something in ages far back, and had there gathered a strength which does not and can never die. Does the unconquerable spirit of

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one of the old martyrs look through them and speak once more in the interests of humanity for another, and a greater reform? Such spirits are, in truth, wanted in this age as in those of the past, although their martyrdom may take a wholly different form. "Suffering," as our seer himself has said, "seems the price demanded for all eternal blessings."

The keen observer will note the contrast between William Fletcher in his normal state and the trance-condition. In the latter, even when lecturing, as at Steinway Hall, with the eyes open, and with the utmost vigour, there was a peculiar look in them, and a dreaminess of aspect before and after, which at once marked him off from the ordinary speaker. His glance in the conscious state, also, will often tell you that he sees something you do not see. It is fixed on some point in space, or it follows some invisible presence, in a way which shews his attention to be arrested by something apart from the external life around him. The life he lived day after day in that little room where more human griefs and secrets have been disclosed than any pen would ever venture to make known, was alone trying to the health. One longed to take this pale, dark-eyed medium, who almost shrinks from contact with an uncongenial visitor, away among the green fields and wild-flowers, and to place him in the midst of some merry picnic party which had nothing deeper or wiser to think of than how a salad can be mixed, or the kettle boiled for afternoon tea. Especially when, as was sometimes the case, his frame was shaken by one of those chest-coughs which seemed to protest against any more work, and which had come on from a cold taken in a raw London fog, did one wish that he might rest awhile and

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let some other, if such could be found, come to the front, and put his hand to the plough. The want of sufficient physical exercise and recreation are undoubtedly likely to sustain a natural delicacy of constitution. Rooms and coats and caps are hardly ever warm enough for him, and the sensation of cold is probably enhanced by the frequent passing of his spirit from his body. It seems hard that physical and spiritual strength should be spent to exhaustion in daily combat with scepticism, or in merely producing conviction, when could the truth be known, this mill-round might be exchanged for labour on a far higher level.

Doubtless, however, the unseen workers will take wise care of him, as well as of the world they wish to teach, and we may safely leave him in their hands. And William Fletcher has not wanted friends, and friends who have been ready to share with him all that their houses possess if they could have persuaded him to take a holiday.

A good deal has indeed been said, in articles upon him, of the social position of his *clientèle*. I attach no importance, as such, to testimony connected with either title or estate, and no reference to any person merely on account of his social influence will be made in any of these pages.

To the spiritualist who is worthy of the name, the only honour he knows is that of a life lived in accordance with his convictions, and the only wealth he acknowledges is that of the soul. I desire to make known the spiritual power of William Fletcher, not because it may be discussed in fashionable circles, not because this man or that whom the world recognises has begun to believe in it, but because it is true. And I place the man or the woman who endeavours to uplift our common humanity, and to teach truth to men,

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on a level where no earthly honour could exalt him or her, even though it might be the gift of a crown. If knowledge of the spirit-life around us wins its way in their consciousness through his endeavours, no greater reward can be possible to a human being. It is enough if the prophecy of the fair Indian maiden at last be fulfilled, and that "the names of Winona and William Fletcher shall go through the world."

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"Like a grain in the sod grew the thought of God,
As Nature's slow work appears;
From the zoöphyte small, to the 'Lord of all,'
Through cycles and sums of years.
But the dark grew bright, and the night grew light,
When the era of Truth began,
And the soul was taught, through its primal thought,
*Of the life of God in man.*

Then the soul arose from her long repose,
At the Truth's awakening breath,
And fearlessly trod as a child of God,
Triumphant o'er Time and Death.
There came a sound from the wide world round,
Like the surging of the sea,
Majestic and deep in its onward sweep—
'Twas the anthem of the free.

Through the ages dim has that holy hymn,
Come down to our listening ears;
And still shall it float with a sweeter note
Through the vista of coming years.
And a voice makes known from the viewless throne,
'As it hath been, shall it be—
On! on from the past! still on to the last!
Like a river that seeks to the sea.'

Hour by hour, like an opening flower,
Shall truth after truth expand;
The sun may grow pale, and the stars may fail,
But the purpose of God shall stand.
Dogmas and creeds without kindred deeds,
And altar and fane, shall fall;
One bond of love, and one home above,
And one faith shall be to all."

*The Divine Idea.* (*Poems of Progress.*)



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## CHAPTER VII.

### SPIRITUALISM, AND ITS RELATIONS TO SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

SPIRITUALISM—what is its history? what are its phenomena? what are its teachings?

Many who read these pages will ask these questions, and it is my design to answer them, however briefly, from the highest standpoint, that the honest inquirer may not be misled, as books mislead, and as persons mislead, with regard to a divine truth.

We are living in a century which is ushering in an enormous change. The locomotive, the ocean steamer, the telegraph, the post-office, and the light which will turn night into day, are alone inventions and organisations calculated to alter the destinies of races, and the face of the globe. The most remote places are visited; thought is everywhere swiftly interchanged; the English language is spoken over large continents; all races are being brought in contact with each other, and the whole mental horizon is enormously enlarged. And it inevitably follows that everything is subjected to the keenest scrutiny; old ideas are being fast swept away; mysticism and superstition are doomed, and with them—and this is the terrible interest demanded for the ruthless borrowings of the past on all that was noblest in man, his liberty of conscience and mental freedom—all assured belief, among the more powerful intellects, in a possible supersensual realm, and a life hereafter.



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In the midst of this arises, in the very heart of the highest civilisations of the earth, something which for its widespread power is unlike anything its inhabitants have ever before witnessed. It is an organised plan at the most critical juncture in all history to prove to them that there is a spirit-world.

No biography of a medium, no records of the proofs of spirit-communion given through his agency, would be complete without some reference to the subject of that plan in its entirety. The history of modern spiritualism, —for it has existed now for upwards of thirty years,—is a strange one. It came like a child, and it grew into a giant. It announced its presence with a few rappings, apparently chance ones, but indicating intelligence, in a remote country town of America; it has conquered its millions with signs and wonders which have been given in no other way, and to no other body of men than those who have dared to look it boldly in the face. It possesses thousands of facts, attested by thousands of witnesses,—facts which have brought hope and comfort to the broken-hearted; power which has chased away pain from the bed of suffering, knowledge which has demonstrated beyond a doubt that there *is* a spirit-world, and that they who dwell in it can and do return to tell us what that unseen existence is, and what we mortals truly are. Sometimes these facts have been suddenly forced upon some astonished family who neither wished for, nor knew aught of, the world-old gift of mediumship; sometimes the most obstinate sceptic has seen that before which his materialism became the greatest folly of his life; sometimes the religious bigot has heard a voice say to *him* as to one of old—"It is hard for thee to kick

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against the pricks," and his fear and hatred of the truth have fallen before some perfect proof of the near presence of a well-remembered but no longer visible friend. Where it would, the spirit-world has chosen its instruments, and bidden them go forth to preach this new Gospel, and they have accomplished it in the face of ridicule, and persecution, and misrepresentation of every kind. No opposition has conquered it; it has gone on with it sometimes side by side, and at last the worst forms of persecution have begun to die away, and spiritualism has survived, as truth must survive, all that man has done to crush it. It has been arraigned at the bar of science; of religion; of the scoffing world; but its witnesses have been too numerous and its phenomena too perfect, to admit of its ever having been in any real danger of the destruction so often desired and designed. Those scientific men in England and America and other countries who have had the honesty to pursue a careful and impartial inquiry, and the courage to avow the results,—such men as Hare, Mapes, Wallace, Crookes, Varley, Zöllner, Weber, Fechner, Scheibner, Fichte, Ulrici, Wagner, Butlerof, Aksakof, and others, all arrived at one and the same conclusion—"The facts are real;" the more experienced declared, "they are attributable to no other source but that of spirit-agency," and among the unwilling converts, not one has retracted his testimony. They were expected to expose the delusion, and they were forced to admit a new truth; and that truth they fearlessly proclaimed at the peril even of scientific reputation,—dearer to some men, perhaps, than life itself. Such will have their reward, for the hardest part of the battle has already been fought out, and the conscious-

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ness which now exists in the minds of millions on this earth that spiritualism is true, is so influencing the mental atmosphere surrounding the centres of human civilisation, that it will enable the spirit-world to wield a mighty power at the appointed time, and to break down materialism for ever.

Another feature is marked in spiritualism in addition to its inherent strength and its capacity to surmount all opposition. It is that it has made its converts among all classes of persons, and influenced every variety of mind. All modern thought has been represented on the human side; every human institution has had its delegates among the converts. I have always considered this one of the most remarkable proofs of guiding intelligence in the movement. Attempts have been made without number to fetter the minds of spiritualists, to create some organisation, something which corresponds to a creed, which all should be called upon to support. They have all failed; all ended in disruption. Why? Because spiritualism has come as a grand corrective of that instinctive tendency in the human mind when it accepts truth, to *force* it upon others; as a great rebuke to that deep-rooted error which has sapped the life of every religion until it has deteriorated to the shadow of what it was, and which has made the Christianity of to-day, with its creeds, and forms, and "articles of belief," a powerless thing in our midst. It is the old warning repeated—"the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The moment any body of men unite together to tell their fellows that they *shall* believe *their* form of truth, that moment beholds the seed of its decay sown with the very thing they wish to keep alive. It may

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be long before the decay ends in dissolution, but sooner or later the hour will come, for it is inevitable. Hence, spiritualism, the mission of which is to give to man a free religion, to restore the Christianity of Christ, and to make it a practical salvation for the wide world, has been guarded from this tendency at all costs. The most varied doctrines have been preached in the name of spiritualism; none have succeeded in founding a permanent sect, while as we survey the whole, we note that some of these half-truths, these imperfectly told truths, which seemed in some instances to be doing rough and crude mental ploughing-work, and breaking up ground with a destructive force, have made way always for something higher, for a good seed to be sown, something which should bring men closer together, instead of forcing them asunder, and which should ultimately unite the world in freedom. That point will be finally reached when the latest discoveries in science, the teaching of the spirit-world, the real nature of man, and the *inner* meaning,* the general spirit, of the higher portions of the Scriptures, are recognised as being in harmony—one great whole. In that hour, the religions of the past will all have their due place as part of the great scheme of human development; the man of science will no longer be called infidel; the human soul will gather to itself just such teaching from the spirit-world as it can best assimilate, and which it feels uplifts it most; and the divine in the Scriptures will shine forth all the more clearly for the

* There is much in the Scriptures which is only partly understood, and which it is probable their writers did not comprehend, and a spiritual interpretation will survive the coming change in religious thought.

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readiness with which the human is acknowledged, and the simple but outlived authority of the early fathers submitted to the far greater knowledge and authority of the thinkers of to-day. Who would not welcome such a glorious change, who contemplates the weakness among the strongest even of mankind? Materialism for the mass would not be scientific salvation, but inevitable moral ruin; and there is a despotism of the sceptic as disastrous to the growth of the spirit as the despotism of the priest.

Moreover, materialism cannot solve some of the darkest problems of life. In its dim light, if light it can be called, the world is filled with millions of victims. The man who has lived for self gets the best of it; the starving girl in a garret who commits a sin to get bread, and who sinks into misery and degradation, and perhaps ends with a plunge into the river, gets the worst of it. Can a true science of morals be evolved from that which can give no explanation of the facts of the past, and can point with no certainty to the hopes of the future? The very progress of the race, to which it is professedly pledged, is one which wholly ignores the individual, and that progress may, for all physical science can show to the contrary, be arrested by some "blind" physical force which may smite the globe and destroy it in a moment, or gradually efface it through the action of some law which is alike inexorable and unintelligent. Even were we guaranteed from these disasters, what recompense can the greatest achievements of mere science make for the loss of friends and the obliteration of consciousness? Till his affections are dried up by an abnormal development of certain of the intellectual faculties, man can *never* regard the dust of those he loves without an emotion which will

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shake his materialism to its very foundation, and make his pseudo-science a very ice-blast to destroy all that is sacred and even most noble in his soul.

It may be well, indeed, to protest against superstition; against the ignorance which accounted the plague, which resulted from wretched sanitary conditions, the work of Deity with which it was almost a sin to meddle; which even now credits the idea that immorality and evil are the direct work of a supernatural evil being; and to point out the true foundations of moral improvement in humanitarian efforts, and right methods in political, medical, and sanitary science; but only the recognition of man's *true nature*, only a noble religion as well as a sound philosophy, can uplift humanity to the plane for which it was designed. Could materialism be accepted by all as its advocates seem to desire, for one who lived for science and whatever it might accomplish, a thousand would break through all social restraints, till the race might be recalled to the condition of the ape,—the soulless man,—the stunted caricature of humanity—the creature overwhelmed and debased by the senses, and the gospel of materialism would stand forth in its true light as a worthless delusion. The chains of a man-made theology shall not be exchanged for this!

The phenomena of spiritualism form a subject far too vast to enter upon in a chapter like the present. The literature devoted to it is full of the evidence of these as absolute facts, and anyone who has read Alfred Russel Wallace's *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, and Zöllner's *Scientific Papers** should turn to personal investigation of the subject

* *Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen:* Leipzig.

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among his own friends if he wishes to arrive at an unbiassed conclusion. Let him discover a medium among them, and let him carefully and honestly give the subject the consideration its enormous importance demands: it will repay him. From an excellent lecture delivered by William Fletcher in answer to and entitled *Objections to Spiritualism*, which were given to him on one occasion at Steinway Hall, the following observations may be aptly quoted:—

"Scientific men say that there is not one jot of the evidence concerning spiritualism which appeals to a rational mind, and that spiritual phenomena are all the result of clever jugglery on the part of the medium, or of hallucination on the part of the observers. Who are the scientific men who say this? Are they men who have studied the subject, or men who, like Professor Faraday, shrug their shoulders and say 'This thing is beneath my notice'? We wonder if the writer of the paper before us ever heard of Robert Hare, of William Crookes,* of Judge Edmonds, of Robert Dale Owen, and of Alfred Russel Wallace? These also are called scientific men, and they became spiritualists simply because they carefully investigated the phenomena of spiritualism. That was the reason and no other; and the refusal to do likewise is the reason —no other—why *all* scientific men are not spiritualists like these."

"Robert Hare has said, 'No man who desires not to become a spiritualist should ever investigate the subject;

* In the *Revue Spirite* it is stated, "M. Camille Flammarion, the eminent French astronomer, writes: 'It is by the study of spiritualism that Mr. Crookes has been led to his magnificent discoveries on radiant matter.'"

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because as surely as he begins to study it, so surely will he follow it, and following it means accepting it, in spite of all objections and objectors.'"

A thousand times over has the truth of this statement been made apparent. A few raps on a table indicating intelligence—and the earliest manifestations were little more than these—seem very trivial, but they were the alphabet which gave the key to volumes. Yet *because* electricity, and unconscious muscular action, and psychic force have been proved false theories, and *because* the facts have developed to a stage capable of demonstrating spirit-existence, and power over physical matter unknown to man, scientific men now retire from the field with an *à priori* argument illustrated by the "absurdity of the existence of a centaur," and this shallow philosophy is accepted as conclusive. Their real position is that of the African savage, who denies the existence of ice because his universal experience has always shewn him that water is a fluid, and who rejects the testimony of the traveller who comes to him and tells him he has walked upon it. He rejects a truth, because his own experience of nature is limited, and the "scientific" argument of the centaur would correspond to the ridicule of the savage on being informed that such a thing as solid water is known. The critical faculty is now engaged, and very usefully for a while, in the work of destruction; it has not risen to the philosophical level which will dispassionately examine anything, and its rejection of well-attested evidence for any series of unexpected phenomena is a proof, not only how readily an unscientific temper of mind is acquired among the most

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gifted of men, but also, how greatly the scope of man's vision requires, by the very method it repudiates, to be enlarged.

Miracles, spontaneous creations, and catastrophes, in view of the reign of laws, unchangeable, eternal, and apparently universal, are impossibilities. The Miltonic description of the "tawny lion pawing to get free" from the plains of earth, excites a smile like that with which we look upon the fairy-tale of our childhood, or the history of a mediæval saint. In a world whose very primary rocks seem to have been formed by the calm and unceasing action of the same forces which are at work now, and which are hardly discernible to the keen scrutiny of a lifetime, the miraculous has no place. Ethnologically, historically, and individually, man also has been subject to law. But if miracles have never occurred, progress and development have. And what have been mistaken for the former have been the misunderstood fore-gleams of the normal capacities of a future condition and a future race.* Rightly apprehended, they fall under the same undeviating law of development, and merely serve to point out a higher view of matter, or to illustrate the nature and destiny of the human race. The true spiritualist, therefore, like the scientific man, may relegate all the old ideas of miracles to the middle ages; the very spirit-form which appears to him by the side of the sleeping medium, and which forms a

* By "miracle" I understand the subversion of an inviolable organic law, such as the ability of an animal to read or write, *not* the use of certain spiritual faculties, or an intelligent power over matter exercised by a being capable of them under ascertainable conditions.

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flower before his eyes, does so in strict obedience to a law which existed even in the nebular mist, and which was a force capable of growth and expansion, but never of arrest or of destruction. In proportion as the soul becomes conscious it becomes creative; it thinks and re-combines, and a locomotive is born, or a bridge which spans the air; free from the body the spirit acquires a power over physical matter, more direct, and even while it is in the act of exercising it, it obeys the law by which a Master-mind has produced universal matter.

The relation, therefore, of spiritualism to science is simply that of addition, supplementary knowledge, not of subversion or contradiction. Spiritualism controverts no established scientific fact of any kind, but it carries all physical science into a higher stage; it reveals the inner forces at work in all the various forms of matter; it demonstrates the primal force which the materialist can only call unknowable and unknown; it shows that this soul-force, this essence of the Central Soul, works ever upwards through physical matter till it becomes spiritualised in man, who is brought in contact with the higher life of the spirit, and the spirit-world. And it will, one day, tell us secrets about ourselves and our own world, before which modern science, and all its wonderful discoveries, will appear like the toys of a child. This may be illustrated by a simple comparison apparent in daily life. What is a green field to a grazing cow? So many square yards of fresh pasture to be cropped foot by foot. What is it to the poet or the artist? A fair and wonderful spot, teeming with golden buttercups and starred with daisies, sweet with the breath of clover, shadowed by swift summer clouds; something

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which the lark rises from, and on which the dews of heaven descend, full indeed, of "all blessed conditions." What is the secret of that vast difference in things that are the same? *Soul.* It is the conscious spirit which answers unto the spirit in all things. And the age will come when the artist of to-day shall be as far below the man of the future, as the dappled animal ruminating at his feet is below himself. To that man an inner glory shall be revealed, and he shall read the secret of the grass-blade and the flower; he shall see the flame of life within them, radiating in rainbow hues and coruscations of light, and as he takes some simple weed or the "rathe primrose" of the budding spring-time in his hand, to him, too, shall be rendered up the wonderful truth that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Our planet may be clothed in the lowest and the most elementary form of matter; it may be the earliest stage of life, merely the birthplace of mind, but it, also, is a spirit-world. And the knowledge of its true nature will throw a burning light upon the unsolved problems which await solution from this one source.

Spiritualism, therefore, has no quarrel with science; only with the scientific man who will not stoop to read the lesson purposely placed, not in his hand, but in some simple guise at his foot; for it offers a grander outlook than the most sanguine positivist could imagine even in his dreams, and affirms that no truth of our physical world can be otherwise than divine, because that world is His, in whom we do, indeed, "live and move and have our being." And, finally, spiritualism explains every fact of human life, and all its painful struggles, however dark, and glorifies every

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form of martyrdom; it demonstrates the inner law of retributive justice,—the Nemesis which follows all men and weighs them by one standard, that of their moral worth; and in that divine balance the outcast of earth may be found far less wanting than the pleasure-seeker who wears a crown. *

* Since writing the above, I have read the chapter on the Spirit-World in Tylor's *Anthropology*, a work in all other respects of a most valuable character. Fact and fiction in it are hopelessly confused, owing to the author's evident unconsciousness of the first elements of psychology in its higher sense,—that is, of man as a spiritual being. The existence of elementary spirits, the power of the human spirit to leave the body, the reality of an unseen world, the spiritual side of all the physical forms of nature, were all dimly recognised by our primitive ancestors, connected with much that was, from the necessities of their condition, and the influences they naturally attracted round them, according to well-known spiritual law, highly apocryphal. Among the Malays there exists a legend that they were descended from white apes; and the same tradition may be found among the Buddhists, as well as that speech was gradually acquired. To argue gravely from these primitive instincts of early races of men that evolution has no scientific basis in fact, would be to take precisely the same position as Tylor does with regard to early conceptions of spiritual truths. Man never rises above his own level, but the realisation of spirit has been one of the great developing forces of his condition, and spiritualists will appreciate the closing paragraph of the chapter in question as few can do, in its earnestly expressed desire for a "belief that takes in higher knowledge and teaches better life."

I may also remark that the value of Farrar's eloquently-written Lives of Christ and St. Paul, must yearly decrease from precisely the same narrowness of conception with regard to natural laws, and their varied spiritual manifestations, according to the necessities of the age, or the mental and moral condition of man. This attitude is probably due to the Paleyism which teaches that a "breach of a law of nature" can prove a truth, that its value consists in its rarity, and that superstition and jugglery can explain that which would reduce the impossible breach to a manifestation of higher law. Hume and Paley, the opposed luminaries of the last century, employ arguments adapted only to restricted knowledge and narrow grounds of sympathy.

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Far otherwise is the attitude of spiritualism towards the orthodox religion, which seeks in vain to teach that by which it is destined to be taught. The church of to-day, with its ritual and creeds of hundreds of years ago, is hallowed by association alone, for it stands as an anachronism in the strongly-beating life of the nineteenth century. Its buildings never were so numerous; restorations of cathedrals were never effected with such care; missions were never so widely spread, as now. In wealth and in external power the State Church uplifts her head in pride, the pride of nearly a thousand years; but what of her moral power over the thinking minds and the feeling hearts of men? What, also, of the professing Christians of to-day —they who maintain, and at an immense cost, these churches, rituals, and priests? Long prayers are made, the devout are not lacking in our midst, alms are eagerly paid, and side by side with this grow and increase war, and all the inventions of war, animalism, vice, pauperism, and crime. Why? Because creeds have taken the place of the living teaching of the spirit, and because adherence to dogmas is valued more than that wisdom which comes from the study of nature, and nature's God. The minds of countless men have been exercised, libraries have been filled, with the learned ignorance of dreary arguments upon revisions, translations, original renderings, subtle doctrinal disputations, supposed meanings of the text of those writings selected mainly by a primitive bishop, which form what is called the "canon of Scripture," a canon which would have been utterly different had the decision comprised or excluded many of the books or epistles; the most important facts are kept back from the people, and

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every nerve is strained to keep up the opinions of an Augustine, an Ambrose, a Eusebius, or a Nicæan Council, in the face of common sense, the laws of evidence, and the sounder methods of criticism which reduce theology to an elaborate apology for its own system. Hardly a clergyman is to be found who does not speak as if the verbal inspiration of the selected Scriptures were an admitted fact. Do we want all this? What are creeds to Him who has called into being millions of orbs, and who has sent His messengers to every race of men and every clime? True, those messengers very imperfectly conveyed the truths committed to their care; too often the prophet overshadowed the message; but they were adapted to the people to whom they were sent, and the very fact that our world has been the birthplace of millions of God's creatures,* who have lived and died in their own faiths, and who are now progressing upwards to a plane we have not even beheld, ought to make us for ever free our minds from the mental slavery which has merely obscured the Scriptures as a source of light.

On what foundation does the orthodox belief really rest? The claim of the historical books of the Old Testament to be a Divine and infallible revelation is one which it is utterly impossible to substantiate, and which is nowhere made in the books themselves. The sole authorship of Moses is disproved from the fact that his own death is recorded, as well as facts occurring during the establishment of the Jewish monarchy, and the most learned and careful of

* Among the Asiatic population, Buddhists, Hindoos, and Mussulmans alone may be roughly stated to number, at the present time between seven and eight hundred millions.



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Biblical critics agree that the Pentateuch owes its origin to various sources. This is so clear that it is amazing to find that it should be concealed or opposed. Will anyone assert that Exodus xxi. 20, 21, 28, 29, xxii. 3; Leviticus xxi. 16, 20; Numbers xv. 32, 36, xxv. 4, xxxi. 1 to 20; Deuteronomy xxi. 18, 21; 1 Samuel xv. 3, &c., &c., are Divine commands and regulations? Is there anything in common between Deuteronomy xxii. 20, 21, and John viii. 1 to 11? Is not the nature of the communicating intelligence, an "angel" or spirit, clear in Judges ii. 1? Are not the anthropomorphic conceptions of the Creator common to primitive races clear in Ezekiel xxi. 3; Nahum i. 2, and such expressions as "the Lord is a man of war"? "I Myself will fight against you in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath"? Notwithstanding that the seventh article of religion in the Prayer Book formulates that "the Old Testament is not contrary to the New," a whole world divides such ideas as these from John iv. 24. The legend of the deluge has been clearly referred to Assyria, and it is more than probable that future research will bring to light the ancient records to which the early history in Genesis is due. That of the fall, however true in a spiritual sense, is already traced. The legends of the serpent which ruined Paradise are of undoubted Persian origin; and became familiar to the Jews during the Babylonian captivity, and the idea of a personal embodiment of evil has been derived from the same source. These early gropings of man into the origin of his race, of the evil, and suffering, and death attached to a physical condition, and which were the first mysteries he strove to solve, are of profound interest as a part of the history of mental development, but the church interpreted them literally and

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accepted them as authoritative revelation. Soon after the establishment of Roman Christianity it became a crime to affirm that death existed before the fall of Adam, and notwithstanding the obvious moral and scientific difficulties in the belief, difficulties as insuperable as the preservation for a month of a variety of different species of animals, birds, reptiles, and insects in an ark, the church still teaches that the race sprang from a single pair. These ideas laid the foundation-stone of that "plan of salvation," and the conservation of the ancient views of atonement by sacrifice, which excluded the races of the past, as they exclude the "heathen" of to-day, and which have nothing in common with the great work of Christ accomplished only when the hour was ripe, and which still awaits perfect development in the life of man.

But the very facts which point out the gradual development of religion are read upside down in the light of clerical theology. Thus a missionary in a late speech in the West of England uttered the following words: "It was customary to paint Hinduism in very dark colours; but if there was much error there was some truth—God had not left Himself without a witness among the people. The Hindu believed in a Trinity, in the necessity that God should become incarnate if man was to be saved, and in the necessity of sacrifice. He had seen, as few missionaries had, thousands of victims offered in sacrifice, and as among the Jews, they were always male animals that were offered. He had seen the Brahmins afterwards sit down and eat the flesh of the sacrifice . . . and he had seen the aboriginal tribes offer a sacrifice so closely resembling the Jewish passover that he was constrained to pause and inquire. Th



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Hindu believed in universal depravity man's responsibility, and man's immortality; *yet* idolatry manifested itself in evils extending throughout the relations of life." Precisely the same kind of remarks would apply to phases of the ancient Mexican religion, Buddhism, Paganism, &c. If these statements, which may be taken as broadly correct, are calculated to prove anything, they show the wide diffusion of certain religious ideas in certain stages of semi-civilisation, and corroborate the views which have been expressed by scientific writers.

Max Müller says that the authentic documents of the chief religions of the world have, within the last seventy years, been recovered in an unlooked-for manner; and the science of religion is one which will teach us to look more charitably on the ancient faiths of the despised Buddhist and Parsee. But if we ever wish to make India a Christian country, we must ourselves become such, and rise to a nobler level in religion than has been dreamed of yet. The catechism will not convert the Hindu. The Gospel of Christ was given to man in freedom; the letters written by Paul, and Peter, and the "beloved" John, were preserved for any reason rather than the subjection of the conscience of man, who is himself the temple of the Eternal Spirit. But they have been worshipped as the savage worships his fetish, or the Burmese his idol, and instead of the underlying principles being apprehended, we have a theology built up of the letter—a material Satan, a material and everlasting hell,* salvation by the physical blood of the

* For two Catholic books of horrors which ought to be publicly exposed, I refer the reader to the *Site of Hell*, by the Rev. J. Furniss (Dublin and London), published *permissu superiorum*, and

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Saviour of men, and an Athanasian creed, and thirty-nine articles formulated in that spirit of terrorism which is the last stronghold of a church no longer strong, no longer powerful in the midst of her power, no longer Christ-like, over the minds of the weak. These beliefs and dogmas, and others like them, have stained ecclesiastical history with crimes; her pages are written in "the blood of the martyrs" —those free minds which rose above the tortures of the Inquisition, the rack, the dungeon, and the stake; thousands in both Catholic and Protestant countries have perished because of them—yea! infants and children of tender years; and these things have been committed in the name of that Holy One who denounced the Pharisees of old as he would have denounced the Pharisees of three centuries ago who gathered upon Smithfield, and as he would denounce the modern Pharisees who persecute the inspired men and women of this age.

Concealment of these facts is too late; they are known far and wide. The last cry of the church against the gifts of the Spirit, that they are "devilish"—shame on the thought which sullies the very page on which it is written! —has been uttered in vain against the "miracles" of Christ, against the faithful early Christians, against the printing-

*Hell opened to Christians*, published "with authority" (Thomas Richardson and Son). The latter is full of the most revolting illustrations, calculated to produce religious insanity. Many Protestant sermons display errors hardly less gross and degrading.

ar idea of hell is of great use to priests in the maintenance xy. So also is the materialised idea of "the day of judg- ich is precisely the same among a large body of religious it was in the time of St. Augustine, when the fact of of the earth was opposed on the ground that "the side could not see the descent of the angels in the a

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press of the middle ages, against the discovery of the true order of the planetary system, against every reformer and worker for truth and liberty, against the action of the mesmeric or psychic powers of man, against freedom for the slave, against the facts of geology and the advance of science, and that cry falls powerless before spiritualism to-day! It is too true, too human in the best sense, to be injured by such a meaningless assertion as this. I will quote the words of good old Judge Edmonds, one of its pioneers, whom the world called insane, and who went on his way, like other reformers, speaking the truth and fearing nothing, till his memory was honoured among his own people :—

"Briefly, then, to the sum of the argument: spiritualism prevents hypocrisy; it deters from crime; it reclaims the infidel; it proves the immortality of the soul; it recognises one God, and man's responsibility to Him; it enforces the great law of the Creator by inducements hitherto unknown to man; it heals the sick; it gives sight to the blind; it cures the lame; it comforts the mourner; it enjoins upon all the utmost purity of life; it teaches that charity which rather mourns over than rejoices at the failings of our fellow mortals; and it reveals to us our own nature, and what is the existence into which we are to pass when this life shall have ended. And this we are taught by a reverend divine, holding a high rank in what he calls the 'Church of God,' is evil! Alas! if it be, by what sign shall we know the work of God?" *

* It is almost incredible that persons exist in these days who associate the great truth of modern spiritualism with the "necromancy" of ancient Eastern nations, in which human

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And what of theology? Theodore Parker truly says: "This theology is the greatest evil of our times. It stands in the way of the emancipation of man. It defends the despotism of the Church, and the despotism of the State, the despotism of the noble over the proletary in Europe, of the master over the slave, of the capitalist over the labourer, of the rich over the poor, of the learned over the ignorant, and, last of all, the despotism of man over woman. It is a lion in the path of mankind." Well does he also say, "The truths of the Scriptures came from God through the Soul of Man. They have exhausted neither God nor the soul. The Bible is made for man, not man for the Bible." And I declare, in the name of human progress, that an infallible book is as great a tyranny as an infallible church or an infallible Pope. What and where is the evidence for such a boundless assumption?

No one can doubt in fact that such beliefs tend to a no less sweeping incredulity. "The most remarkable, and the

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sacrifices were made to Moloch (alluded to in Deuteronomy xviii.) or that of the Druids, in which divination was practised by the examination of the internal organs of human victims! What sorcery was in many of its phases may be gathered from volumes still extant in the library of the Vatican, and probably many others happily perished in the destruction of the Alexandrian Library. That crimes worthy of the Inquisition in its palmiest days could, by any possibility, be associated with the beautiful philosophy of spiritualism, is an instance of mingled bigotry and ignorance for which we should look in vain from any class of persons except those who profess to teach the people religion.

On the other hand, an ordinary case of mediumship at an Irish revival, in which a young, untaught girl spoke above her normal capacity in good French, is made the ground of a solemn declaration in a recent number of an evangelical journal that she was "filled" with the "Third Person in the Trinity."

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most seriously threatening feature of the present case," says a writer in a journal not given to recognising the signs of the times with too great readiness, "is the high moral character, the unquestionable devotion to truth exhibited by the leading agnostics of the day. . . . That a long and dark eclipse of faith may possibly be before us in the future there are few bold enough to deny." It is true. We have no longer to deal with a Voltaire, who excites disgust at the same moment as he commands respect as the avenger of Calas and La Barre. The conclusions reached have been arrived at by different methods, in the light of a far wider knowledge, and rest on more unassailable grounds. Nor is the influence of an imperfect information concerning an unseen universe confined to these. The great demand felt, when not uttered, for "more light," is also experienced by a very different class of persons from the school of Clifford and Comte. While the one turns to the ideal in humanity, the other seeks consolation in little works which bring home more forcibly the idea of the unseen life spoken of in the far-off era of the early Apostles. The *Gates Ajar* has reached the rare honour of a sixpenny edition, and *Life in Heaven* and *Heaven our Home* have each been circulated to the extent of some 170,000 copies. Even the Scotch Presbyterian seems somewhat doubtful about the delights of a heaven of perpetual kirk, "where congregations ne'er break up and Sabbaths never end," and is ready for a more rational view of spiritual existence. Yet when the trance-speaker is sent forth to men to destroy the doubts of the one class and inform them that there are spirits and a spirit-world, and to confirm the hopes of the other and reveal to them far more than the uninspired can teach, he

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is received with ridicule, slander, and suspicion. All the prejudices of men find vent on him, prejudices that would not now be tolerated against the Unitarians, Roman Catholics, or atheists. There is liberty as long as the State creed is upheld, both to doubt and to conjecture ; but *proof* is rejected, and just as the Catholics tolerated atheism in the eighteenth century while they persecuted the Huguenots to the last, so do the churches tolerate materialistic science and denounce what they recognise to be a rival religion. The cold denial of the agnostic is less hard to bear than the knowledge that a living power is within their midst which asks neither for their benediction nor bends to their authority, but refers itself to the thinking faculties of men.

Even a faith must be chosen by reason, and there comes a time in the history of the race, as of the individual, when faith must give place to knowledge. The religion of the Jews of old was that of childhood ; the religion of the apostles that of youth ; while the religion of Christ and the philosophy of spiritualism are the practical religion of manhood, in which reason, the most God-like quality of man, is enthroned. Hence, no angel is ever sent in visible form to coerce belief in all, or to make truth acknowledged by minds which have never realised it, never won a noble development in the upward struggle ; truth can no more be forced on minds unripe for it than the civilisation of the white man can be forced on the races of the southern seas ; heaven's messengers are always veiled, and not seldom appear in such lowly guise that they appeal only to those whose souls are free. To such, the appeal is clear, and the voice powerful enough to lead them bravely on.

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When the Immortal Child was born there was "no room for him in the inn"; he drew his first breath within a manger; and in like manner has the spiritual truth, now pleading in his name for man's immortality, been ushered into the world. There has been "no room for it" in the church of creeds; "no room for it" among the men of science; it has lived amid dark surroundings and good and evil things, and only the unseen angels, who have guarded it, have realised its holy mission. Opposition, prejudice, and indifference are nothing new. In Rome Christ was caricatured; Julian declared his spiritual power was equalled or excelled by the common thaumaturgists; to Tacitus, Pliny, and others, Christianity was a "prevailing and disgraceful superstition" and "infatuation," and St. Jerome says the followers of Jesus were looked upon as impostors. The majority of the great Roman philosophers treated it with the silence, no less eloquent, of contempt. When we remember that Christ himself was accused of blasphemy and of madness by the Pharisees, the parallel between the Founder of the Christian religion, the early Christians, who were accused of every sort of crime by the sceptical Romans, and modern spiritualism, is complete. Its humble methods, its weaknesses, have been held up to ridicule; its vast body of ever-increasing evidence, its beautiful truths, and its clear meaning have been studiously ignored.

That mighty spiritual power which is influencing the world, and before which the proud materialist shall at last yield and become as a "little child," is outside the church, and well is it for man that it is so! The fishermen of Galilee were chosen; not the high priests: the publicans

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and sinners were comforted; not the scribes. Again the parallel: the Jews expected a temporal king; they beheld the "son of a carpenter": men expect a judgment-day; they are brought face to face with their conscience, and the indelible life-story of their own spirit: the churches look for a miraculous millennium; and with silent, but irresistible power, spirits teach men how to create that "kingdom of heaven which is within us." Many there are among us who, like Christ, "weep over Jerusalem," the ancient and beloved city, and cry "O Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye *would not!*" The martyr and his truth alike seem to perish at the time, and sink out of sight. But what if the Jews *had* received him who uttered this touching lament? What if Caiaphas *had* relented? The crowning work of the grandest life that was ever lived on earth would have been left undone; the sacrifice of death escaped; and immortality through him would never have been revealed. The world wanted, not the Christ that was welcomed and crowned, but the Christ that *died.* The worshippers of creeds awake not too readily, or the creeds would never fail: they long remain blind; because the great and holy mission of spiritualism is to restore in its purity and in its strength the forgotten Christianity of Christ; to teach the things that even the disciples could not bear to hear; to unite mankind, of whatever race, in a religious brotherhood; to show men how to obey God's laws which they daily transgress in the name of piety; to reveal to them in the plainest way, even to the eyesight, what the good and what the evil spirit is, there, as well as here and

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wherein the highest conversion consists; to inaugurate the Christ-reign of love, and purity, and peace; above all to destroy for ever the dogmas which disgrace the intelligence of our century and which have alienated the noblest minds from truth, and outraged the very name of religion, and to teach once more and for ever that "*God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*"

Let the self-righteous of church or chapel denounce and reject it if they will; they are only foretelling their own doom. Against the Divine truth nothing will prevail, and the angels of God call out their chosen instruments, and fulfil their appointed work, and pass them by with holy scorn.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### TRANCE ADDRESSES AND PUBLIC TESTS OF SPIRIT IDENTITY AT CAVENDISH ROOMS.

"Soul, if thou hast truth to utter,
Speak, and leave the rest to God!"

FROM the time of his first appearance as a public worker in the cause of spiritualism in London, William Fletcher on several occasions supplemented the toil of his ordinary séances, with all the anxiety and fatigue they entailed, by delivering trance-addresses on the religion and philosophy of spiritualism.

The first was delivered at Langham Hall, in aid of Mrs. Weldon's Orphanage, on May 21st, 1877, the subject being *The Religious Element in Spiritualism*, which was chosen by the audience. He again lectured at Doughty Hall on July 1st, but the scanty attendance and lack of sympathy with these efforts prevented him from offering his services permanently. He gave, however, throughout this year and the following one several lectures in aid of charitable purposes at different halls in London, with more or less success, the themes chosen being both of a religious and secular character, and comprising the following list: *Spiritualism, a Religion for To-day; A Half-Hour from Alexandria to Jerusalem; Who are the Christians? How and Where do We Stand as Spiritualists? The Spiritualist's Heaven and Hell; What Must I Do to be Saved? How a*

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*Spiritualist enjoyed Egypt; Weighed in the Balances and Found Wanting*, &c.

In a brief report of *Spiritualism, a Religion for To-day*, I find the following thoughts, which are worthy of record as forming the guiding principles of our medium and the band of spirits who surround him :—

"It has been said that where knowledge and science leave man religion takes him up; that beyond our efforts and our researches, beyond life's victories and defeats, beyond our joys and sorrows, there is a power in the world, known as religion, which becomes our guiding star and leads to that perfect peace which passes our present understanding. . . . We need a religion for to-day, for this world, and this life, as well as the next, and spiritualism comes in response to the need. . . . Many persons call themselves spiritualists simply because they have seen forces at work for which they could not account—because they have beheld movements of articles in their houses which were not produced by human agency; but these persons are not spiritualists; they have only seen phenomena, and are phenomenalists. We do not need mere curiosity-hunters. . . . Let us strive for and practise spiritualism, until to be a spiritualist shall be the most glorious name on earth, until, being in harmony and love with all men, we make the 'whole world our country, and to do good our only religion.'"

This strong and earnest advocacy of spiritual living has been, from first to last, the key-note of all William Fletcher's addresses, and in this is, and has been, the secret of their strength and power.

Early in the month of December, in 1878, while

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listening to a lecture of Mr. Lambelle's, in Ladbroke Hall, he had a vision, in which he saw the appearance of himself lecturing in a room surrounded with mirrors, and the time when these addresses would be given, namely, early in the following year, was also shown to him. He related this incident to a gentleman, who at once said, "You have described the Cavendish Rooms, for it is the only public hall in London surrounded with mirrors." These our medium had never seen, but he was so strongly impressed to make immediate application for the rooms and to commence a course of lectures on spiritualism, that he at once set about this new and unexpected work. On making inquiries he was told it was impossible for him to engage them as they were let till Easter, but so deeply influenced was he to make further efforts that he applied at head-quarters, and was then informed that the hall had just been given up by the person to whom it had been let, and that he could engage it at once for the course of lectures proposed. Through the generosity of Mr. E. Harrison Green, of Filey, he was enabled to do this, and to announce that the admission would be *free*. For his own services he received, neither at this nor any other time, any sort of remuneration, and his only day of rest, Sunday, was thus given up to the instruction of the people. The brave front he maintained in this work may be recognised from the contrast between a private letter to myself,—one of the brief notes he was wont to send to friends at a distance,—and the earnest appeals he published to spiritualists in their various journals. He did not conceal the weariness he felt from the few friends who knew too well how true was his complaint that there are "very

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few in this world who can realise *what* the workers have to endure!" He could not bear mere phenomenalism, and wrote: "I am sometimes a little heartsick over the way in which spiritualism seems drifting away *from* its great usefulness, away from its great mission; only misused! Every great movement must guard itself from Jesuits, and those who are its teachers must be very firmly persuaded in their own minds, otherwise misfortunes will come. I can see this so very plainly that I have prayed for strength. Those who say there is no religion in spiritualism are those whose eyes are covered with scales; and because *they* have not awakened to all the glory that is possible in it, is no reason why it is not before them; however, it is not the first time the 'light has shone in the darkness, and the darkness has comprehended it not,' only I do protest against the abuse this high and holy truth is subjected to, and it is for this purpose I have begun my lectures."

His personal feelings with regard to the new work amounted almost to aversion, so much did he shrink from constant appearance before an audience; but he felt that a great duty lay before him, and all the more so that for a considerable period there had not been one place suitable for the public in which the truths of spiritualism were taught, in London.

His appeal to spiritualists is so full of the strong purpose of his life, an enthusiasm for his cause, and a belief in its boundless power for good, that I cannot forbear giving it *in extenso*, as a part of that outline of character, as well as of truth, which I design to write for others:—

"Dear Friends,—It is with no little timidity that I venture to call your attention to the series of meetings I am now

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inaugurating, knowing how many there are in the ranks of spiritualism better able to do justice to the subject and carry on the work. But London is too large and spiritualists are too numerous to permit such a dearth of places where the gospel of our instructive religion may be dispensed. I believe the duty of the hour is the mission of a life, grasping in essence the undeveloped possibilities of an untraced future; and its faithful performance, seed sown for an infinite harvest. Science is a power, religion a precept, atheism a circle, in the centre of which spiritualism exists and plays an important part in developing the intrinsic worth of its surroundings. Born of God, in harmony with science, an epitome of wise truths, boundless in its capacity for good, it can truly be called the soul of science, and the intellect of religion. The present is, I opine, an important epoch in the world's history; mind is ceasing to toy with matter, and is evidencing in many ways its own real supremacy, and the duty of the hour is to develop to its fullest capacity the 'one talent God has entrusted to His people.' To this end, I invite all friends of our cause to assist with their presence and experience in making these meetings of service to mankind and of value to the cause. I present this with no flourish of trumpets, with no appeal for money, with only a desire to serve those who desire to have a platform from which something can be heard concerning the religion of spiritualism. My altar is truth; my creed the highest law God has revealed unto my soul; and giving as I do the week to professional labour, I feel that one day in seven I can best serve God by freely dispensing the gospel of spiritualism to His people.

"J. WILLIAM FLETCHER."



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That "one day in seven"—the only one in which he had felt safe from the wearing contact with scepticism and worldliness, from the strain of work which began early in the morning, and sometimes lasted far into the night,—the only one devoted to friends, to that restorative of sympathy for which the weary-hearted worker for a new truth with his whole heart longs,—was given up, as he said, at the pathetic command of Him who long years ago said to every inspired soul, "Feed my lambs." The sacrifice was not made in vain. The audiences at the Cavendish Rooms were large; at times, numbers of persons were turned away for want of room, and those present listened to the lectures with no little delight. William Fletcher then announced a Sunday class-meeting, on the plan of the Children's Lyceums in America, for the purpose of teaching the spiritualists "to be" the most important social and religious truths which our century has recognised. He wrote to his friends: "The future of spiritualism is in the hands of the young. Are we not then reminded—fathers, mothers, spiritualists,—of the earnest charge we have in our keeping, and of the faithful work we have to perform in guiding rightly the feet of these little ones? Men live in deeds, not years. And, realising the darkness we have walked in, may we not, in removing the fear of death, and by cultivating a perfect faith and trust in God, make the mental pathway of our children sunnier, the yoke of bondage which has rested upon our shoulders less weighty as it rests upon theirs, and thus enable them to teach the truths which we, 'crossing the river,' shall have left untaught?"

Mr. Desmond FitzGerald generously consented to act as superintendent of this class, which lasted until William

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Fletcher was obliged to devote himself wholly to the more urgent, though hardly more important work of public teaching. A Sewing Society was formed in connection with the class, and a committee which sought to give aid to the poor. All these were unquestionably steps in the right direction.

It will hardly be credited, however, that in the ranks of spiritualists some existed, who, not content at withholding their support from our hard-working medium, condescended to insult him. I give the incident as an illustration of the difficulties which were only too truly foretold by the spirit who foresaw his career.

Services for the celebration of the thirty-first anniversary of Modern Spiritualism were held in the end of March at the Cavendish Rooms, under the management of Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher, and to these all the principal spiritualists in London were invited. I quote from the *Spiritualist* of April 18th, 1879:—

"Letters from various gentlemen who had been invited to speak were read by Mr. Fletcher, including the following post-card from Mr. Enmore Jones:—

"'To Mr. Fletcher.—I have not attended any of your Sunday services, because I consider they are only a business advertisement dodge. Spiritualism can never thrive while camp followers talk religion for dollars, and set up meetings for that purpose.'

"'This,' quietly added Mr. Fletcher, 'is from one who calls himself a 'Christian spiritualist.'"

Expressions of disapproval at once and deservedly followed. In thus placing upon more permanent record an incident of minor importance, I desire only to call attention



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to the great principle that "Christian spiritualism" * must be lived as well as talked about, and that it means love and forbearance, rather than distrust and persecution. The man who speaks God's truth and does God's work, and does both in love, is the Master's follower—no other, let his creed be what it may.

A feature of great interest had now arisen in connection with these Sunday evening services at Cavendish Rooms, and this was the public exercise of William Fletcher's clairvoyant faculty. Few mediums are sufficiently gifted to manifest their power amid the varied and inharmonious influences of a mixed assemblage, but unfavourable as the conditions were, they were at last overcome, and the tests were given week after week, sometimes to strangers, sometimes to sceptics—persons who came to listen to "the lecture on spiritualism" for the first time,—and were always recognised either subsequently, or at the time. A *desideratum* in the cause was thus attained.

These tests were given as soon as the magnetic condition of the hall permitted the spirits surrounding him to exercise their power; but that they were at first very exhausting to him is evident from a letter published in the *Banner of Light*, of March 22nd, 1879, by Mrs. Louisa Andrews, the well-known spiritualist, from which I give the following quotation :—

* "Christian," or more properly, *theological* spiritualism, has been an attempt at grafting the new truth on the old forms, and as a movement it has almost entirely failed, a fact upon which the previous chapter will throw some light. All the orthodox doctrines have occasionally been taught by spirits who have entered the other life deeply imbued with them, and who wield an immense influence over the established teachers of similar views.

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"Last Sunday night the room was full, and I have never seen collected together to listen to a spiritualist lecturer so many from the educated classes. . . . There never was a more respectfully attentive audience; and among them Mr. Fletcher and his wife evidently had many warm personal friends. His health is delicate, and it was with difficulty and effort that he got through his last lecture, and gave the very satisfactory tests which followed. . . . Surely such good and disinterested work merits reward; and I believe that in spreading the light, and giving hope and faith to many bereaved and doubting hearts, he receives his compensation—the only adequate compensation possible in such a case."

Among those given, I select a few to show the character of these brief proofs of spirit-communication and identity, given through our clairvoyant. Some of them are *vision-pictures*, produced by spirit-power:—

"I see a young boy in trouble: now he is on the sea, dressed like a sailor; he is much taller now. Again he appears still dressed in the same way; he is walking in the street; he staggers and falls dead; the name of James appears; he is near that gentleman"—indicating a gentleman at the back of the room. (Recognised.)

"An old man walks up and down the room; he is about eighty years old. He comes to some one whose name is Frederick; his own name is William P. His object in coming is in answer to your wish, and to make you know that spirit-life is true." (Recognised.)

From *Spiritual Notes* of May, 1879, the following may be extracted: "Let our readers imagine, if they can, the startling effect upon a stranger who has casually ente-

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the hall—almost by accident, as men say,—who knows little or nothing about spiritualism, and who has never seen Mr. Fletcher before, or heard of him, and who now, to his utter amazement, hears, publicly given, a minute and accurate description of some 'deceased' friend, with mention of his name and the time and circumstance of his departure, accompanied by some tender message of love, such as he knows that one alone could have given. And yet such evidences of spirit-life and presence are given by Mr. Fletcher Sunday after Sunday; and their correctness in every particular is usually openly acknowledged by those to whom they are addressed. . . . We subjoin one or two as fair specimens of the whole:—

"'I see,' said Mr. Fletcher, 'a large ship. She is rushing through the water very rapidly. Now it has become so dark that I can scarcely see. Now they are throwing out a line; but the ship strikes the rocks, and all on board are rushing about in terror. They take to the boats, while the waters open and the ship sinks from sight. Not a person is drowned. There is also a lady, who knew you far away from here. Her name is H. She sends the following message.' (A long message was given.) 'This vision comes to the gentleman sitting there!' (indicating a stranger in the audience.)

"The gentleman rose and said that he had just received news of the loss of a large ship running from London to Melbourne, but could not quite understand the particulars. He begged, however, to acknowledge his complete identification of the spirit of the lady, who was a great friend of his in Australia. We may add that the Australian papers just received announce the complete wreck of this steamer,

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as having struck on the rocks, while rushing at the rate of nine knots an hour through a dense fog, and just as they were about taking the soundings. The crew and passengers were all saved. The captain is now under trial at Melbourne.

"Again Mr. Fletcher said, 'I see a large crowd of people, so strangely dressed. They are now fighting and killing everyone they come in contact with. I see a gentleman fearfully cut to pieces by them. The same gentleman stands very near that lady, and says that he is quite right now. His name is H. C., and he desires me to say' (a long message was here given, and the spirit was recognised by the lady indicated as being her husband, who was killed in the Indian Mutiny, and the message, she said, was correct in every particular)."

The prophetic character of some of the messages gives additional confirmation of their reality, and the following example I quote from the same number :—

"A few Sunday evenings since Mr. J. W. Fletcher, at his service in Steinway Hall, gave a message from the late George Thompson, in which the spirit said that one of his coadjutors was about to join him in the higher life—the terms of the message pointing plainly to William Lloyd Garrison. The prophecy has been fulfilled, and William Lloyd Garrison has passed away." The writer justly adds: "The London daily papers have been full of eulogy of the departed, speaking in glowing terms of his noble work for the abolition of slavery, and describing him as one of the wisest and best men of the past generation. They carefully avoid to mention, however, that he was a spiritualist, accepting the truth, as one says who knew him well, 'not

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as a matter of faith, but as a matter of knowledge.' And yet these same journals, which can scarcely find words in which to express their admiration of William Lloyd Garrison, usually speak of spiritualists as though they were either fools or knaves."

In addition to this I find in the August number of the same journal, in a paragraph on *Steinway Hall*, that "written questions were handed to the speaker, who, without looking at the papers, simply held each one to his forehead and answered the questions at once. There was no hesitation, no delay, but the language of the replies flowed on as smoothly as if the whole matter had been thoroughly studied beforehand."

In the article in the *University Magazine* these tests are spoken of as exhibiting "extraordinary insight into personal lives and into the past," and some specimens of their character are given. Of course the tests vary, ranging from what some might call more or less vague ones to the most clear and minute descriptions of, or messages from, deceased persons, given in such a way that failure of recognition is impossible. They seldom number, brief as they are, more than some five or six, owing to the demand made on the vital force of the medium, which is far greater than most persons suppose. Various other journals containing notices of the lectures at Cavendish Rooms and Steinway Hall, have referred to the unwonted phenomenon of the public exercise of clairvoyance. Among them I may instance one in the *Scientific and Literary Review* of October, 1879, in which it is candidly stated that "on these occasions convincing proofs of spirit-identity and of occult knowledge are given, received, and suitably acknowledged," and the *Law Times*

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of June, 1879, gives a similar tribute to this rare gift, remarking "that in some instances the clairvoyant descriptions were of a startling character." Other articles testify to the amount of interest this clairvoyant power had excited in an influential section of the public, among them being a brief description in the *Daily Telegraph*, which is in itself nothing short of a phenomenon considering the utter want of common honesty and common justice which has always characterised the English Press with regard to spiritualism. It closes with the avowal that "if the people who claim to have witnessed the clairvoyance are to be credited," "surpassing proofs of identity and occult knowledge" are given "by means of a gentleman lecturing in Steinway Hall." It is encouraging to note that there are some minds, even among those who write for the daily Press, who do *not* require, as Sydney Smith so graphically puts it, a surgical operation to introduce a new fact into their consciousness. A touching instance of the eagerness with which our unseen friends avail themselves of an opportunity to speak to those who need counsel, perhaps, which no earthly relative, however near, could bestow, has been published in *Spiritual Notes* for April, 1880. "Very recently Mr. Fletcher said, 'I see three spirits, mother, sister, and wife. They stop there, near to you' (indicating a gentleman in the centre of the hall). 'They are in great trouble, and a message is written. It comes from all three of them: "Dearest, turn back; all last night we were with you, trying to *make* you see the right path. You are wrong, wholly wrong. To-morrow it will be too late, and all will be lost. Misery is before you. We brought you here to plead with you, to help you, and, if possible, to avert the

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fearful calamity before you."' The vision passed, and no response was made; but when Mr. Fletcher retired to the ante-room, he was there met by a gentleman who, with tears in his eyes, thanked him for the message he had received. He said that he was passing the hall with a friend, and being in great trouble he came in; and the message was true in every particular." What an answer is this to those who questioned "the good" of the communications which were made there!

In the same journal for August, 1880, another remarkable communication is related which speaks for itself, but I prefer to give it in the exact words of Mr. A. Glendinning, who sent me an account of it in 1882.* He wrote:—

"With Mr. Fletcher I have had several séances, (unpaid for), and it may interest you to know that my son, who died two years since, controlled Mr. Fletcher on the platform at Steinway Hall and addressed my wife and myself. We did not expect any communication so soon, and we went to the hall to see if Mr. Fletcher's lecture would change the current of our thoughts, and lift some of the sadness which many combined circumstances had thrown over us, and which was intensified by the loss of our eldest son. When Mr. Fletcher was under control, the very first words arrested our attention. 'I have come to fulfil my promise,' a promise made first in joke years ago, but repeated often on the sick-bed with the utmost eagerness and emphasis—'If you die first, father, and there is another world, come if you can and let me know

* Added in 1882.

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it; if I die first it will not be my fault if I do not seek out some medium through whom I may come to you, and let you know I live.' And latterly, when his doubts (if he ever had any) about the reality of continued existence had all gone, when he felt he was going first, how often did he repeat, 'Mind I *will come.*' The whole message through Mr. Fletcher was characteristic of him, but part of it contained reference to a dream he had when ill, (the reference being, in *Spiritual Notes*, 'I wanted to get better that I might help you, and I thought I should recover until I had that dream when I saw myself carried away, and then I knew it was all over'), which I could not at the time understand, for I did not know anything about this dream, nor did anyone else except Gerald Massey, to whom I afterwards found that my son had told it. Thus, Mr. Fletcher, under control, referred to a matter which only one person knew of, viz., Mr. Massey, who at the time of the meeting was several miles distant. Nor was this all, for the directions given us by my son through Mr. Fletcher, on being followed, led to new and startling developments which chased away the dark clouds from our hearts."

If it be an axiom that the only scientific theory is that which accounts for the largest number of facts, then, spirit existence unquestionably carries it against all other so-called explanations of "psychic phenomena." It is both more rational and more natural than any other.

I conclude with one given at Steinway Hall to myself, which possesses some additional interest from the fact that external evidence of the reality of the communication as

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being from a spiritual source was furnished at the same time. I was sitting by Mrs. Fletcher, and suddenly *felt* there were spirits near me. I instantly mentioned the sensation to her. She replied: "How strange you should have spoken! Two spirits have just come to you, gentlemen, one of whom is older than the other. His name is *William*, and I have requested him to send a message to you through Mr. Fletcher."

The request was, of course, mental, and no communication of any kind passed between Mrs. Fletcher in the hall and her husband on the platform. At the close of the séance the tests commenced, and the second one I recognised as being meant for me. It was as follows: "I see a gentleman, an advanced spirit, wholly removed from everything connected with earthly things; one who was a strong man in principle, and who now lives in the light of knowledge. He says: 'I have a great mission on earth, and it is connected with those who belong to me, with the members of my own family—my wife and children—some of whom little realise the truth I long for them to know, although it is not the case with all.'" After a few touching words, in which the spirit said we "did not dream of what his life was in the unseen world," a prophecy was uttered with regard to myself which was shortly afterwards fulfilled; and the further statement was added by the medium: "I see the name *William;* I think I have seen this spirit several times before."

This was the case, and I at once acknowledged it was true. My father's spirit—for I knew by the whole character of the messages and the very phrases used, who it was—

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then moved my hand to write—"I *did* send the message. It is correct.—W. GAY."

Three proofs, all independent of each other, were thus given on that occasion of the reality of spirit-communication. I may add, that on two or three occasions, while listening to the trance addresses, I have been perfectly conscience of the presence of the spirit of the medium near me, and sometimes he has written his name in the familiar handwriting, with the peculiar F used by him, as a mark of personal identity. Any good clairvoyant would be able to testify to the fact that during the trance-condition his spirit is absolutely absent from his body. The enormous importance of this fact in producing conviction of the reality of the existence of the human spirit can hardly be over-estimated.

Some of the communications I heard were openly claimed by the recipients of them, and some were so clear and pointed that they must have been privately recognised, but reticence, and now and then even the painful character of the messages themselves, prevented persons from giving testimony to their accuracy before others. The silence is unfortunate for the medium, who must always be the sufferer, and it is with regret that I add that William Fletcher has received anonymous letters from sceptics present, inquiring "how much longer he meant to deliver 'spirit-messages' which nobody recognises, and whether his imagination might not be exercised at times in a more fertile manner." The coarse and arrogant brutality of some sceptical English minds is in itself a phenomenon unmatched.

The truth simply is, that the spirit-messages are not

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only all genuine, but have rarely failed to convey, at all events, the conviction of clairvoyant power to those to whom they were addressed. In almost all instances, recognition, public or private, has immediately followed their delivery.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### TRANCE ADDRESSES : (*Continued.*) STEINWAY HALL.

AS the engagement of the Cavendish Rooms drew to a close, William Fletcher determined to obtain Steinway Hall, with a view of establishing, if possible, a permanent public service for spiritualists in London. He applied for it and made arrangements for a course of lectures with every apparent satisfaction both to himself and the proprietors, when he suddenly revealed the subject of those lectures,—spiritualism. The effect was magical. On no terms could a hall so aristocratic be desecrated by association with anything so disreputable. Our medium was, for once, amused rather than hurt at the opposition ; he foresaw that he should obtain the hall, and that he should lecture there, and he did not lose courage. His impressions, as seemed invariably the case, were verified. "I mean to get it," he publicly announced, sure of the result foretold him. So he did. Major Wallace Carpenter and General Maclean, with some other friends, used their influence to induce the proprietors to alter their decision, and the result was that the hall was engaged for a year, and the Sunday evening of April 6th, 1879, saw our medium quietly standing on the platform, delivering from it his first trance address.

In point of merely numerical attendance the lectures at Cavendish Rooms may be said to have been a greater success, but the important object of vindicating the right of spiritualists to teach their truth under the best and most favourable circumstances possible, was attained. The hall

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was far removed from a noisy thoroughfare like Regent Street; it stood in a quiet, thoroughly respectable West End neighbourhood, and lectures there were calculated to attract a permanent audience of some of the most thoughtful and influential persons in the metropolis.

Opinions naturally differ as to the value of the religious and moral instruction conveyed to his hearers through William Fletcher; so also do the lectures differ from each other. With him the philosophy ranks far above the phenomena, and nothing disappoints him more than to find his clairvoyant power as "mental phenomenalism" attracting a deeper attention than the strong appeals made through him in behalf of a religion which he counts highest and best, and longs to see a practical power in the world. That they were appreciated, however, there is extensive evidence. In the *Portrait in Words* of our medium in the *Whitehall Review*, the writer concludes with an expression of "satisfaction at hearing him lecture with singular eloquence on the philosophy of spiritualism," and in an article in *St. Luke* of November 29th, 1879, entitled *Among the London Churches*, a similar tribute is rendered. For the sake of those who do not live in the metropolis, I will quote one or two of the descriptive passages, which are written with a sparkling pen:—

"The platform at Steinway Hall is occupied by a grand piano right and left, and a lectern, with old oak chair at its rear, in the centre. Soon after seven o'clock the pianist (whose name I ascertained to be Mr. L'Estrange) took his place at one of the pianos, and a small, but, as it proved, most efficient choir gathered round him. Mr. Fletcher, a tall, gentlemanly man, with dreamy eyes, advanced to the

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lectern and gave out the hymn. He was attired, by the way, in simple evening dress, and I was pleased with the modest, unaffected way in which he read the first verse of the hymn from the *Spiritual Harp*, as the Steinway manual of psalmody is called. It is a portentous volume as big as an octavo oratorio, and much thicker; but all the Steinway *habitués* had shouldered a copy, and warbled tunefully from it. The hymns are, of course, very characteristic, many of them reminding one of the *Cantiques Spirituels* of Madame Guyon. . . . . I was favourably impressed (again I find myself using that spiritualistic term) with this opening; and even still more so, when, in place, as it seemed, of an ordinary Scripture lesson in one of our services, Mr. Fletcher read from the lectern, with real dramatic power, a poem by Lizzie Doten,* who, I am given to understand, claims to write by direct spirit influence. The poem was called *He giveth His beloved sleep*, and opened thus:—

> "'Night drops her mantle from the skies,
> And from her home of light above
> She watches with her starry eyes,
> As with a mother's tender love.
> The sounds of strife and toil are stilled,
> And in the silence, calm and deep,
> The word of promise is fulfilled,
> 'He giveth His beloved sleep.'"

'After this a young solo-singer stepped forth from the choir and sang Mendelssohn's exquisite tenor air, 'Then shall the righteous shine.' I thought I recognised the face,

* Author of *Poems of the Inner Life* and *Poems of Progress* (Colby and Rich, Boston), many of which are very fine.



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and was sure I recognised the voice as that of Mr. Tietkins, a member of the Civil Service Choir. I remember him well at the pleasant concerts that society used to give at St. James's Hall, where Mr. Arthur Sullivan was conductor of the band. When the solo was ended, Mr. Fletcher offered an extempore prayer. He was very brief, very earnest, and as the last words fell from his lips, the choir took it up, and sang *pianissimo* a nice metrical version of the Lord's Prayer, which again comes, I find, from the *Spiritual Harp*. Scarcely any liberties have been taken with the original, save in so far as was necessary for the rhythmic flow of the chant to which it was set. Then came the address."

The above is an excellent description of the little service, which was simplicity itself. In an article in *Spiritual Notes*, it was truly, if unwisely, observed that "Mr. Fletcher had perhaps done more than any one man" to lift spiritualism into the recognised position due to its great importance, * and some letters published at the time give such a favourable account of some of the subjects treated that I cannot forbear from quoting from them somewhat at length, as it is my intention in this chapter to give some idea of the nature of those truths taught which are one day destined to become the religion of the world, and which will quietly substitute for sectarianism and creed-worship a belief in harmony with the needs of man. *One Who Listened* writes :—

* The appreciation thus expressed may serve to throw some light on the jealousy with which William Fletcher was regarded by many who are ignorant of the uses made by the spirit-world of certain selected instruments for designed ends, apart from any will or wish of their own.

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"His lecture, *Are the Manifestations of Modern Spiritualism Anti-Biblical?* evidenced a thorough knowledge, not only of Bible history, but the law that seems to have controlled spiritual manifestations in all ages.

"Mr. Fletcher's utterances, while clear cut and forcible, are always characterised by a spirit of toleration and liberality which goes far towards convincing his hearers of the inspiring source from whence these truths emanate.

"His guides treated especially of the manifestations of spirit-power recorded in the Bible, and claimed that the same law which operated in the age of so-called miracles is now in existence, and operates through the manifestations of modern spiritualism.

"The propositions were many and well sustained, and those who for years have felt that the Bible was rich in precepts and pathos would have found new beauties to admire, and fresh truths held out for their acceptance, while spiritualists who in some instances have utterly discarded the Bible, found that much wheat has been wasted in order to destroy the chaff.

"The lecturer took occasion to impress upon his audience that he made no effort to sustain the Bible, because its occurrences were in many instances counterparted by the spiritual manifestations now being developed; nor did he value modern developments the more because they were paralleled by the manifestations of Bible times. But he sought to prove, if possible, that the spiritual law had existed and demonstrated itself throughout all the uncivilised and bigoted eras of the past, and has



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outlived the King Herods of bigotry, who would have killed it in its infancy.

"Mr. Fletcher's comparison of the phases of mediumship now extant, and those possessed by Peter, Cornelius, John, and Paul, and above all, Jesus, were such as to encourage the workers of to-day in feeling that they were supported by the precedent of honourable work and workers, and to give exceeding gladness to those dear companions of the Truth Teacher of Nazareth, who left this work early, with their medial work unfinished. His description of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the faithful devotion of the two Maries, the scepticism of the Jews, the bribery of the Roman soldiers, reached a sublimity of pathos rarely equalled.

"We wish that those who are in London could have heard and profited by these really inspired utterances, and fully realised the beautiful analogy so skilfully drawn between ancient and modern spiritualism."

A criticism on *Spiritism* in *Morning Light*, one of the organs of Swedenborgianism, which deals especially with William Fletcher's lecture on the *Day after Death*, while admitting that some of its philosophy is sound, cavils at other portions of it because "everyone would ultimately become good," and winds up with the energetic remark that "it is really astonishing how anyone can sincerely believe these professed spirit revelations." What *is* astonishing is the readiness with which human beings with average brains yield up their reason to another human being because he has taught certain doctrines with more or less lucidity, which they stereotype and expect the world to worship for ever. The only religion which can be of any permanent use to man

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is one which, while it enlightens, also defers to his conscience and his reason, and which does not seek to hold him down, but to lead him on.

A brief paragraph in the *Troubadour* of April 17th, 1880, entitled *Mr. J. William Fletcher and Christianity*, deserves special mention for the truth which it points out. "In a recent lecture at Steinway Hall, Mr. Fletcher said: 'It is a great mistake to suppose that spiritualism is opposed to Christianity, for the highest Christianity is the truest spiritualism. What spiritualism does take issue against is that form of worship called Churchianity, which is as far from the teachings of Christ as the heavens are from the earth. Every true spiritualist looks upon Christ as the Divine Teacher, the Perfect Man, and consequently the highest expression of God possible to this world. He was not God, but an emanation from God."

The addresses I heard myself, I should say appealed to the spiritual faculties of the hearers, quite as much as to the intellectual; sympathy, intuition, insight, were all required for the appreciation of much that was said, and in proportion as the hearer might or might not be gifted with these faculties, they might appear to him transcendental or sublime.* One feature may be discovered by the most materialistic of the audience, and this is, that gems of thought are scattered among the discourses, some of which are couched in choice and vivid language. They are precisely such thoughts as may be looked for in vain from the ordinary pulpit, and evince a deep insight into human nature,

* It was generally admitted, however, that in pathos and power some few of them might take rank among the most eloquent oratorical efforts ever made.

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a consciousness of its innermost life,—in short, the power of inspiration. A few quotations from the reported lectures may suitably conclude these chapters upon William Fletcher's work as a lecturer, and I can only express my regret that hundreds of similar suggestive thoughts have been uttered, and lost to the world as soon as they were spoken for want of any sort of record at the time.

The subjects alone show the enormous advance in thought made by spiritualism upon the old sleepy sermons of orthodoxy, embracing such telling and profoundly interesting themes as *The Change called Death; The Transition Sphere; The Resurrection; Materialisation; Death and the After Life; Some of the Laws relating to Spirit-Control; The Heaven of the Spiritualist; Occupations of Spirits; The Origin and Destiny of Spiritualism; The Day after Death; What is the Philosophy of Spiritualism? Thomas Paine in Spirit-Life; Calvin in Spirit-Life; Objections Answered; Why do Spirits return to the Earth?*" &c.

The very titles suggest a new era in religious thought. I will quote a few brief passages from some of these, the only addresses at my command:—

"Beyond the rank and position the world can give; beyond the fame and renown society may yield; aye, beyond everything in the power of this world to confer, is the gift of the spirit called mediumship. . . . There are those who have said that in these lectures there was nothing new. No, there is nothing new; and we intend to repeat the old until you realise more of its teachings in your lives; there are new thoughts, new truths, new lessons waiting for you, and when you are ready they will be given to you. The

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lessons of spirit and spiritualism are not simply to be talked about, simply to be thought about, but they are to be lived as well."—*Laws relating to Spirit-Control.*

"We need a Heaven large enough, not only for ourselves, but for those who may differ from us in religious sentiments, and yet in heart be equally as good and true as we are."—*Heaven of the Spiritualist.*

"As the ceaseless ebb and flow of the ocean gather to its sandy heart new territory, and thus shorten the distance between itself and the main land, so also does the action of time upon the spirit lessen the inharmony between mind and matter."—*Transition Sphere.*

"More than repentance is necessary to atone for even the smallest sin."—*Ibid.*

"The world in which you live is the world of results. The spirit-world is the world of causes."—*Occupations of Spirits.*

"Any man who dares to be wiser than his fellows is said to be either mad or demon-possessed. When Benjamin Franklin dared to call the lightning down to demonstrate the possible use of this great agent, the world to a man cried out, 'He is trifling with the elements and the vengeance of God!' But regardless of what the world might say, he followed the inspiration within him, and to-day his name is honoured and respected even by those who condemned him most. Through this discovery he made, city is bound to city, country to country, and nation to nation, and as we stand near the shores of the ocean and hear the little clicking sound, we know that beneath the ocean-wave the cable-wire is laid, and that the new world is whispering to the old, telling the story of its sorrows and its

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joys, of its victories and its defeats, of its successes and its failures. Well can we say as we look upon the life of this man or that, 'They may call thee mad and monk-accursed, and load thee with disgrace; thou wert born five hundred years too soon for the comfort of thy days, but not too soon for humankind! God's work is to be done, and the outcasts of our sires become the saints whom we adore.'"—*Ibid.*

"What is genius? Inspiration."—*Ibid.*

"When a man or a woman gives expression to a new truth, no matter how much value it may have to the world, he or she is met with 'the world is not ready for it.' When was the world ever ready for anything? and your reformers are but marking out the pathway over which future generations must pass."—*Ibid.*

"Whence the power of the spirit? We find that spirit began when God began, and dates its birth from the beginning of time; that which is called the spiritualism of the present day is only the action of the same spirit which we trace through all ages of the past, varying in degree and power as the development and unfoldment of the human race differ in the various stages of the world's history."—*Origin and Destiny of Spiritualism.*

"There is more in the flower than the colour; there is more in the bird than its plumage; there is more in the child than its form; there is the indwelling spirit endeavouring to manifest itself, and that which you perceive is but the outward expression of the power within; and it is this action of spirit which in early times was called a miracle, because it seemed so far away from any known law the people failed to comprehend it.

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"The first *great* spiritual manifestation we find is evidenced in the life of Jesus; through all the ages before his birth the possibilities of the spirit existed the same, but never till his eyes opened upon the world was a purpose so clearly manifested. And when you look back and think of those wise men whose hearts had been moved by the prophecy given them, who believed and trusted in the coming of the Messiah, who journeyed on, with only one thought and one faith, what a lesson of humility and trust it should teach us! What unseen spirits must have guided their thoughts and quickened their hearts with courage and faith! What loving hands must have led their footsteps lest they should stumble and fall, while they, with god-like hope, waited through the long weary hours of the night for the rising of the star, and when at last the world was filled with its holy light, with what delight they rushed forward to carry the glad tidings of a Saviour's birth, and to bear their offering of peace and love, and lay it at the feet of the Holy One! They found the Messiah, the long looked-for messenger from on high, but a sleeping child in his mother's arms, a fresh, sweet bud on the tree of life.

"Think you, that the little infant, even in those early days, caught no shadow of the coming time? That the vision of Calvary, the weary night in Gethsemane, and the horrors which followed, made no impression on the infant Jesus? Yes, even in fancy, the shadows of the coming future were already falling around his young life, and as years roll on he becomes wholly mastered by the demand of the time, and through his life the light of Divine truth was thrown. From the hour of his birth to the hour of his death, he was the embodiment of the great power of the

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spirit-world, which dates itself back to the beginning of all things, co-existent with God Himself. We find the early manifestations of spirit-power teaching no lesson, suggesting no truth, and therefore ending where they began; on the other hand, in the life of Jesus there was a complete embodiment of spiritual intelligence; it was the power of God revealing itself to the world, and unto mankind."—*Ibid.*

"Unless spiritualism stirs your heart as it was never stirred before; unless it brings to you grander impulses and higher aspirations, a broader charity and a diviner thought, you have not understood its true import. Neither man nor woman can, in the light of spiritualism, harbour an unkind thought towards any person living."—*Ibid.*

"The truth spoken *once* is spoken for ever."—*Resurrection.*

"Though nineteen hundred years have swept by, and many reformers have performed their part, still, upon the page of time no words of purity have been recorded which have ever equalled those of Jesus. His divine thoughts born into this outer world will ring for ever and for ever through the coming ages. Never has a soul reached such a height of grandeur as did his, when bound, wounded, crowned with thorns, he could yet cry out—'*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!*'"—*Ibid.*

"How is it that in the name of one God, we find among you not less than six thousand religions?"

"God is love, we say, and he who has most love in his heart is most like God."—*Day After Death.*

"Happiness is not the all-in-all of any man's soul. There is a word grander than happiness, and it is duty;

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and by a divine law perfect happiness follows duty, and that alone."—*Ibid.*

"The world has long been prayed for; it needs working for to-day. The kind of prayers which begin and end in books, are not the prayers which the world needs at present. You cannot greatly benefit the starving poor in the garrets of the dark bye-ways of your cities by praying for them. Prayer is needed; but prayer strengthened by works. Had more of the prayers offered for the poor been materialised into deeds, there would be fewer wretched and suffering than there are now."—*Philosophy of Spiritualism.*

"The Christian Church has been teaching you to prepare for death; spiritualism prepares you for life, and life eternal. You are to live in the world which is unseen, and your entrance there will be made according to your life here. A life of truth and purity means a bright sphere in the world hereafter; a life of sin, of selfishness and bitterness, means darkness and misery there, until the spirit shall have outgrown its lower conditions. Let the world know this, that the lives of its people are its real riches, that each noble act brings the heart nearer to God, and that the philosophy of spiritualism is the philosophy of life, to help you to live higher, truer, nobler lives here, and to win a sweet welcome in the hour of change from the arisen loved ones who are waiting for us just behind the vail."

"Every phenomenon has existed many, many years before men's minds approached its meaning; but its true apprehension has never in any way changed the action of the phenomenon itself. The earth upon which you stand, in ancient time was thought to be only a vast plane. The rivers followed their courses, and the trees grew, the flowers

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blossomed, the fruits ripened with the changing seasons; and after the human mind had become sufficiently inspired to understand that the earth was not a plane, but a globe, revolving through space,—its revolutions and its seasons changed not at all,—men only arrived at the comprehension of a fact that had existed since time began. The stars in yon heavens once seemed to the childlike intelligence to be the lamps placed by God to dispel the shadows of night; but there came a time when men knew that they were not only lights, but worlds, containing the same possibilities as the planet possesses upon which you live; nor did the apprehension of this fact produce any change in the eternal order of the heavens. So with these manifestations of the spirit: they are not called into existence because you have commenced to turn your attention to them. They have existed for all time, but it is only in this age, when the mind has begun to free itself from the thraldom of priestcraft, to dare to think for itself, to seek light from all sources of knowledge, that you are beginning to understand that nothing happens in vain, that every variety and manifestation of force has some purpose hidden underneath it." —*Hauntings.*

"Science has given you truths concerning the great laws of nature, the properties of the air you breathe, the story of the stars, the wonders of the ocean. It has bound pole to pole by a chain of commerce which no vicissitudes of time can break. All this science has done. But science must go a step farther, and recognise the spiritual law that underlies all things. Unless science does this, it becomes a dead letter. The great hungry heart of humanity has been sending up its cry to God, asking for answers to its

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questionings as to the life hereafter; and now is God known no more? Do the prophets slumber that no answer comes? You spiritualists hold the religion of the present in your hands; the science of the future is in your keeping. From you must come the impetus that shall cause science and religion to walk hand in hand throughout the world."—*Ibid.*

"In no other question under the light of heaven has evidence been rejected except in this question of spirit-existence."—*Objections Answered.*

"'No communications of any importance,' we repeat with wonder! If you were to ask the poor black slave, who for so many years was held in bondage in the Southern States of America, what benefit spirits have accomplished for him, you would find such an answer as no human lips could express. The Proclamation of Emancipation that delivered thousands of dark-skinned men from the degradation of slavery, was written through the mediumship of Charles Forster, in the White House at Washington. Of no value to you, who sit quietly here, but something of such value to others that it meant freedom to thousands of souls held in fetters which were a curse to the great land of America.

"'No communications of any importance,' again we say—when you can see every day of the week those whose lives have been blessed and redeemed from things which crushed them, through the power of spiritualism! . . And we would remark that since spiritualism has been understood in this world, a very great deal of information has been given about the other world which this one very much requires to know, and which must be repeated till it

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is thoroughly assimilated. Men are only learning elementary lessons. While they are engaged in opposing our work do they expect the conditions of communication to be such as to permit of instruction in exalted science when they have hardly learnt the first elements of morals?"—*Ibid.*

"God is the Grand Economist of the universe; and no strength, no power, no material, is wasted in His dominion. Through all the changes of time, and through all the phenomena of nature, from the tiniest sand-grain at your feet, to the stars that thread their way through space, there is law. From the blade of grass to the highest form of civilised human life, from the bird that sings, to the angel that treads the plains of heaven, each and all, no matter what their degree of life, are controlled by a law superior to themselves. Nothing happens by chance."—*Why do Spirits Return to the Earth?*

"There is no such thing as finality. Each truth that has been clearly apprehended by man, fails in its work unless it leads him to a higher truth, to the contemplation of a higher and a grander law."—*Ibid.*

"Take spiritualism out of the Bible, and what is left? Merely the blank leaves of a book."—*Ibid.*

"Those who live for the world's smiles, deserve nothing better than to see them change to frowns."—*Ibid.*

"The man of science lives in the past, knows something of the present, and dreams only of the future. The spiritualist steps into his life, and shows him that where there exists physical science, there exists also spiritual science; and we prophesy that the time is not far distant

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when out of the varied forms of science and theology, there will be built up a religion which shall comprehend the truths of all."—*Materialisation.*

"Wherever you look you find some force endeavouring to manifest itself through one of the many forms of life in nature. The flower that grows at your feet, the bird that wings its way through the air, the man or woman dwelling in your midst, are all manifestations of a power within. The outward form is the materialisation of that power. The flower speaks to you of its life in the sweetness of its perfume, in the beauty of its colour, in the grace of its form; it expresses, through its being, a phase of spiritual life. The bird singing its happy song as it flies in the air, expresses, indeed, through its being a higher thought than the world can grasp. The men or women who make up the world of which you form a part, are *spiritual* men and women. The outward form is but the materialisation through which the spirit acts, in which the spirit dwells."—*Ibid.*

"The manifestations of spiritualism in their highest forms are not for scientific dissection; they are for spiritual growth."—*Ibid.*

"The passing ridicule of men is but the rustling of dead leaves upon the ground; they sound only because they are stirred."—*Ibid.*

"What did the first materialisation mean? What was its deep import to our race? In that moment was accomplished freedom for the human soul, and a new era in religion. The death-knell of spiritual bigotry and sceptical doubt was sounded: the terror of death removed; hope brought to the sorrowing; comfort to the downcast;

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and the priceless knowledge that, beyond the grave is life, —and life eternal."

"The world lives in the lives of the few rather than in the lives of the many. There are a few, who, marching forward in the path of life, mark out the track over which the feet of the rest must pass."

"Some of you know what it is to see a great hope arise so close to you that you could touch it with your finger-tips, but a great moral law stands between you and it. Take it and you sin; leave it and you suffer."

"The life devoted to doing good is simply the most religious life in the world."

"All judgments are final. Every day of your life is a judgment day. Every deed you do brings its reward or condemnation. When you enter the spirit-world you will find you are placed exactly where you belong. Here you may seem to be almost anything; there, you *are* what you seem."

These thoughts will, I think, suffice to prove that the addresses were calculated to appeal to a cultivated audience, and to educate thinking minds; there was an entire absence of sensationalism, of the remotest tendency to do anything that would excite, both in the matter and in the way in which it was delivered. As a pure and free form of religion, utterly above formalism, ceremonies, and dogmas, spiritualism is calculated to permanently influence the highest and most spiritual faculties in man, and to lead him to live the life of which others only talk. Never was it better placed before the people than at Steinway Hall. The clairvoyant tests which always followed made the

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hearer realise, as nowhere else could he realise, the nearness of the spirit-world, and rendered the simple yet touching Sunday evening service a unique one in London.

A committee of spiritualists decided to make it a permanent institution. It was a fitting tribute to the courage and earnestness of the trance-speaker, who gave his strength, his only hours of rest, and even, to some extent, his means, to the cause of truth—that truth which will one day be recognised and welcomed by the many as it already is by the few, and which will reveal to man the great designs of the past, the present, and the future.



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## CHAPTER X.

### THE MESSAGE OF SPIRITUALISM.

SINCE writing the foregoing pages, one of William Fletcher's lectures, reported, and published in the *Banner of Light* of January 17th, 1880, has been so favourably commented upon that I considered its appearance in the present volume might not only interest its readers, but might be of service to the cause of spiritual truth. It is clear, rational, and sound in its teaching, and like most of the "messages" now given from the spirit-world, is designed, not to revolutionise but to *awaken* thought.

"THE MESSAGE OF SPIRITUALISM.*

"What message does spiritualism bring to mankind In the consideration of any subject, and before it can be either accepted or rejected, there must first be understood its facts, its claims, its work, and to a certain extent the result growing out of it. It is useless for us to say we do not and will not believe a matter we do not understand, or to say that we have entirely accepted a theory of which as yet we know nothing. That belief only is worth having which comes from deep thought and study. If this method had been adhered to with regard to spiritualism, there would not have been so many of the mistakes which have already occurred. For there are so many in the world disgusted with the theories hitherto presented to them, that they turn

* Delivered at Steinway Hall, September 21st, 1879.

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away from all that the past has held, from all that they have previously been taught to believe in, and seeing a new theory, a new philosophy, a new religion, without considering any of the requirements of the fresh lesson, they accept apparently at once all that it may demand of them—accept it in name before they have apprehended its teachings.

"If you were to ask the world in general what is meant by Modern Spiritualism, you would probably be told that it meant simply a knowledge of the life beyond the grave; and there are many who have called themselves spiritualists for years and years, with whom this is the only basis of belief. But what would you think if a man informed you that over the sea there was a land filled with plenty, offering food and warmth and shelter to a whole nation of starving people, and no one went there? Or what would you think of a man who made some great discovery, and lived on without attempting to utilise it? You would say that both the man and the people were no better off than they were before the information was given and the discovery made. The world is no better off because certain valuable elements exist in it, unless use is made of those elements; knowledge is only a power for good when it leads to higher things. How many are there to-day who call themselves spiritualists, and who have progressed no further than the apprehension of this one fact of immortality? They have learned the lesson that beyond the grave there is life, and think that is all that it is necessary to know. And they have sat down contented to let the world move on as it will, having settled for themselves the question of the life hereafter.



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"And in view of this matter, organisations have been made, societies brought together, just as narrow in principle, just as self-conceited, after having accepted this fact, as any human institutions that ever were formed. They have assumed that they are spiritualists because they accept one of the principles of spiritualism, and have endeavoured to foist upon this theory all their preconceived ideas: hence you have, at this hour, in a million spiritualists, persons representing almost as many different ideas. It is a great trouble that thus far in the history of spiritualism there has been no settled code of belief. Spiritualists have admitted into their ranks those who were wholly unfitted by education or experience to take care even of themselves, and the troubles that followed were a logical result, the weaknesses of poor human nature asserting themselves over and over again, and shewing how long is the journey to that spiritual perfection which it hopes some day to attain. Therefore when men and women say simply, "We believe in immortality," they have made great spiritual advances, but they are yet far from being true and thorough spiritualists. It is the life that makes the man. And these facts that are given —the proofs of spiritual existence—are only the stepping-stones toward that life. You may believe what you will; but the thought that inspires you and the act—it is these that benefit or harm both the world and yourself. Is there a greater responsibility resting with spiritualists than with other people? Yes; from the moment you are brought in contact with the teachings of spiritualism you have taken upon yourself a new dignity and a new office. You are suddenly brought to see all things in a different light; brought to realise that God will save not the few but the

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many; that heaven is not constructed simply for your benefit and for that of a select few with you, but that all who are honest and true of heart have the same right as you to a home in the heavenly mansion. And you then begin to understand that all the laws of spiritualism are universal laws—all its lessons universal lessons. There is no law that applies to those inside the church that does not apply to those outside as well. There is no law by which a certain number are clothed in glory and power, and others shut out from the same privileges, whose claims deserve equal consideration. For it is of no consequence what expression you find for your religious belief, provided only that you are honest in this, the best and highest your heart may know. And if you ask now what constitutes a spiritualist we answer: The right doing of any man or woman for the sake of right—the living up to an honest conviction, whether in secret or in the face of the world.

"But what message does spiritualism bring to science? We hear continually that spiritualism has something to say to science. What is that 'something'? In all past time the theology of the church has assumed science to be its worst enemy. It held that the man who followed scientific pursuits, who applied the lessons of science to daily life, was to be looked at askance; and every advance made in science has been made against, rather than with, the approval of the church. Theology has again and again flung obstacles in the path of progress, has bidden science stand back, with the charge that its teachings were of 'the devil.' And the scientific man has, therefore, turned from theology, saying, 'Well, I can demonstrate the facts of science, I can understand the teachings of Nature, but I

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cannot demonstrate theories of theology; and because I believe in science, theology shuts the doors against me.' But is it possible that the more a man knows of Nature the less he must believe in God? Theology taught that stars were only lamps in the sky; but the time came when it was found that they were not lamps, but worlds, following out their vast and ordained courses. But did men love God the less for this new knowledge they had acquired? No; they saw more of His sublimity, more of His power; the great system of creation was more plainly revealed to them than before. Geologists were told that the world was made in six days; but turning to the story of the rocks within the earth, they perceived that it was made not in six days, not six thousand years ago, but that from age to age this world had been progressing until it reached its present form of development. Should men who have gained scientific knowledge of the stars lose their belief in God? In the God of theology, perhaps yes; but the great God of Nature has been drawn nearer to them, and they to Him; for they have read not in the pages of a printed book, but in the pages of Nature, of works not made nor marred by man, but eternal as God Himself.

"What is science but the interpretation of Nature? and what is Nature but the outward expression of God? So that instead of the scientific man losing his perception of God as he advances in his researches, he should gain an ever clearer realisation of Him. If he turns from God in the study of his work, it is because he has no real desire to learn of Him who is the inner life of all things. But then steps in Religion, and says: 'Because you have realised these truths, we, who will not admit them, say

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that you shall not mingle with us; you shall be outside the palé of our religion.' So the man of science has either to turn aside altogether from accepted religion or to leave his science behind him when he enters the church door. But surely if a thing is true outside the church, it is also true inside the church. If the lessons of religion, and of the other departments of science are true, surely they have a place in, and belong to, the church. For a thing that is founded on fact has kinship with fact in religion and with all beside.

"What, then, does spiritualism say to science? Simply this: that as science declares the facts she presents to the world to be capable of demonstration to all intelligent minds, so we as spiritualists say that the facts our philosophy, our religion is based upon, are also capable of demonstration to all intelligent minds. We claim that we have so many facts we propose to demonstrate to the world, and also that they are as worthy of the world's consideration as anything else the world contains. Ay, more: for they demonstrate the lessons of that higher life of which hitherto the world has had no definite knowledge We say to the man of science, 'Your science should be a part of your religion. If you can see God in every grain of sand, in every star of heaven, may you not also see His love in every human being?' It were madness indeed were he to say, 'Because I have not seen these things I do not believe them to exist.' We demand that each intelligent mind shall consider them; and we, as inhabitants of the spirit-world, purpose to work and labour until this thing is felt and heard in every part of the earth, and presented to each human being clearly and distinctly. It is not our

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desire to attack or to overthrow anything, but we come with the desire to make you realise more truly the life that awaits you beyond the grave, when your mortal existence has run its course. And we say that that life is as capable of scientific demonstration as any other fact in Nature. Science turns from this and says, 'We have no time to investigate spiritualism.' Very possibly; but you have time to condemn it, and if you gave one half the time to the study of it which you now spend in denouncing it, you would act very much more wisely, and your judgments would have to be reversed. It is the easiest thing in the world to say 'I do not believe,' or 'I will not study this; it is beneath my notice.' But everywhere you find spiritualism stealing on and leavening thought; and why? Simply because it is ordained of God, and in all past ages has been endeavouring to manifest itself. In former times its adherents suffered for the crime of their belief at the stake or in the prison cell. But now there is a great work both for spiritualism and for science to accomplish, and we hold that knowledge within ourselves which shall bring all the teachings of science and of religion into harmony, and the union of these two is the result for which we are labouring.

"Why, you stand in wonder now as you look upon the wide ocean, and hear one nation whispering to another across its thousand miles of wave. Scarcely has a battle concluded in a distant land before word comes of the death and calamities that it has occasioned. One continent whispers to another of its successes and failures; but we are assured that the time will come when yonder world shall communicate with this one, and yonder planet which seems

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so far away, shall tell the conditions of its life to you, just as now one country communicates with another. For there are on some of those planets the same forms of life, but much lower and less fully developed than those on this planet of yours; and on others, on the other hand, greater spiritual development than here. And by-and-by, and not in the far future, you shall learn that all, from the least to the greatest, are working under one law, and by one power. There is only one standard, and that is truth. And whatever man may say of his religion, if it will not bear investigation—the fullest light which science, the knowledge of God's creation, can turn upon it—you may be very certain that he has it from no Divine source.

"To turn to another branch of our subject: What message does spiritualism bring to the criminal?

"By criminals we do not alone mean those who may be inside prison walls. For there are as many criminals outside as inside the doors of the gaol. There are certain laws of men, and when these are violated punishment falls on the transgressor. There are laws also of God, which when they are broken seem not to be followed by punishment, always or apparently; but retribution, notwithstanding, the future inevitably holds in store. There are many in this world who think they have kept the laws of this world, and that with regard to God's laws, even if they have violated them, it is no great matter. But we assure you there are many, ay, many whom the world applauds and praises, who every day violate the laws of God; while the laws of men they are very careful to observe. The great Father has placed in each human heart the silent voice of conscience that tells each one what is right and what is wrong to do.

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You do not need any other voice; the voice of conscience points out that which is right and that which is wrong. And in the light of this fact, when you realise the law of God in your own hearts, you are held responsible for what you do though all the world may praise you for your deeds. There are many inside the prison walls guilty of no other crime than that of breaking men's laws. They have violated no law of God in their own hearts, but have opposed that which man has instituted, and have therefore incurred punishment.

"But as a man thinks in his heart, so is he toward God; and that man, no matter who he be, who lives falsely to himself, is guilty of a crime in the sight of God. Virtue and truth are sold in the market and are counted as nothing when weighed against success, and the one thing the world cannot forgive is failure. No matter how grand and how true your motive, if you have failed, all society shrugs its shoulders, and you are forgotten the next moment. And in this maddening rush after earthly success, many a noble soul has gone down the tide, because in aiming to do his work he was obliged to sacrifice all that was truest in himself, and so lost the crown he should have gained. Ay! seek ye not the riches of this world, where 'rust and moth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal.' The world's greatness is left behind. Seek the riches of the spirit, which clothe the soul in a garment of rarer splendour than human eyes have ever known. But what of those who are confined for actual crimes within the prison-cell? What message has spiritualism for them? This: That even though they have made many and sad mistakes, there is yet a possibility of retrieving all, and of entering into the enjoy-

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ment of a truer and better life. How does the prison act upon such now? A man has committed a crime, and as he passes the prison-door, he looks for the last time on the world, home and friends. For when he comes forth, no matter if guilty or not guilty, he returns to the world disgraced forever. What are your prisons to-day? Are the men reformed who come out from them? No; they leave them with hearts more savage and embittered than when they entered. Their whole treatment is one which tends to increase rather than to check the individual tendency to crime. You see some poor, miserable lame creature tottering down the street; you pity him, you can see *his* deformity. But yonder prisoner in his cell has a spiritual deformity, and that has brought him to that cell. Which needs the most your pity? and should it not rather be pity than condemnation? Was it not the sick that needed the physician, and not they that were whole, and is it not so now? If these prisoners are all they seem to be, how much more do they need your tenderness and love than men of more favourable organisations and circumstances! Once, in company with our medium, we witnessed, in a prison, a sight we shall not soon forget. In company with him, and with kind-hearted people who brought with them their bright-faced child, we went one day into a prison to see the prisoners within. And as we went along the corridors, dreary-looking, and damp, and dark, and looked in here and there at the poor, hungry creatures, wearing out their lives more like caged animals than men, the child peered into one cell where there was a boy hardly older than her young brother at home, to whom as he came nearer to the grating, she said: 'Brother, may I sing to you?' and the boy said

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'Yes;' and as her little voice rang out like the voice of an angel through the corridor—it was but an evening hymn she had learned at her mother's feet, but the tones were so sweet, and life was so dull there!—forth from the cells came eager, restless faces to watch the singer, and listen and catch every note of that soft, unwonted music. The parents called the child to them again, and the warder pointed to a man in one cell, who he said was so hardened that all the eloquence of the priest fell as naught upon his ear. He turned away from all; he was the most desperate prisoner they had. The little child came near to the cell he occupied and looked at him. He reached out his hand to touch her, and said: 'Sweet, pretty child, sing me the last verse again.' And as her voice sang forth gently and clearly the lines—

"There let my way appear
Steps unto heaven;
All that Thou sendest me
In mercy given;
Angels to beckon me
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!"

the poor wretch cast himself down upon the floor, and with tears streaming down his cheeks, sent out such a prayer as never came from pulpit or from preacher, 'O God, let love come back to *me!*'

"Ay! there was hope for him, for God was there; and through the lips of that sweet child his angels *had* spoken to him. Yes; these men are human still, though it may ...e voice of a little child to touch their hearts. And ...lism comes with this message to all who are wearing

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out their lives behind the prison-bars, comes with this one word, '*Hope:* though life be lost here, this is not eternity. There is still a life beyond, where God is. Mistakes may be many, wrongs you may have done; but no wrong is eternal. And that man or woman, who, having committed a great sin in the world, lives to overcome that sin, stands heaven-crowned. 'There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine just persons that need no repentance.'

"What message does spiritualism bring to the world? What answer can be made, when to-night, far away in another land, death and destruction march on so many who are dear to this country of yours? When we see the shadow of war, followed only by another shadow blacker than the first, can we say of these things that they are right? No; in no way is war justifiable, save in self-defence. War for the sake of power, for the sake of conquering the weak, has wrecked the lives of thousands; but this is not glory. And that nation which has built itself up by the destruction of others, is like the house upon the sand. We see now other troubles and destructions coming in many ways; and we say, let your prayers and thoughts and desires be those of peace and love, that these destructions, these legalised murders may cease in your midst. What sight is more horrible than to see tens of thousands of men standing before each other, simply for the purpose of slaying each other, that their rulers may reap some short-sighted and momentary advantage they call glory! Not thus shall the kingdom of God stand in your midst! And there is the returning wave of judgment to come which cannot be averted!

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"The message of spiritualism to the world? It is that each should work for others in forgetfulness of self—to lay aside all in which the good of others is not concerned. There is not a single reform in the light of heaven which does not belong to spiritualism; not a single good work that can be accomplished but spiritualism has some connection with it. You, who quietly stand aside and allow sins to be committed, are responsible for your share, even though your part be merely that of silence. Each human being is responsible for the wrong that is done, in so far as he is able to protest against that evil and change that wrong into right. By-and-by we shall ask with reference to the sin of intemperance, what these poor creatures with ill-formed bodies and stunted spirits are doing in a world in which they have no right to be; and we shall try to see if spiritualism can show any remedy for this misery.

"In conclusion, we repeat, as we cannot repeat too often, that a man's riches consist not in the things he may possess; the riches of the soul are greater than all the wealth of earth. Strive earnestly to attain that fulness of spiritual power, that when you come to cross the shining pathway and stand before the portals of heaven, your misdeeds may not arise to tell you, 'Thou art not ready to enter here.' Live truly, live nobly, strive ever for the best, and do *your* utmost to hasten the advent of those bright days—the hope of the world—when wickedness shall cease in your midst, when the Comforter shall come with blessings in his hands and words of love upon his lips, and bring peace to abide for evermore among you."

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## CHAPTER XI.

### PUBLIC MEDIUMSHIP.

IN writing the life of a public medium, there arise so many questions as to his true position, and his value to the world, that it is absolutely necessary to devote a few pages to their consideration.

The first thought that strikes the candid inquirer comes in the form of a criticism, an objection. If it be true that a medium does possess these spiritual gifts,—that he does tell us something we could not realise except through his power,—he should receive no remuneration; those gifts should be free; that power demonstrated to all. Like Christ, he should labour for nothing.

The fallacy that underlies this reasoning exists in the idea that money, or any earthly gift *can* recompense a man for work which is full of spiritual suffering. The medium, if he be one like William Fletcher, a spiritualist in his very heart, is at war with the materialism of the world he lives in; he dwells in a sphere of his own, not even understood by his fellows, and the realities of which are undreamed of even by those closely associated with him. He is in daily contact with the unseen life; he reads the secrets, he beholds the very spirits of those mortals whom he meets, and on which the story of their lives is written in indelible characters. The outward grandeur of the houses he may enter, and in which he may be a gladly-welcomed guest, is little to him who feels at times influences in what would

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appear to ordinary eyes the brightest spots on earth, which are simply insupportable. He is not attracted to others because they hold exalted positions, or possess a widespread influence, but only to those who are in sympathy with him. He has daily to endure the depressing influences of scepticism, ill-concealed ridicule, perhaps unexpressed dislike and contempt, and among those his seership touches and convinces, are many who utterly fail to apprehend its true and highest meaning. He is *alone*,—

"His soul is like a star, and dwells apart"—

and at any time that loneliness may be intensified into the agony which bigotry can and will inflict, and through which every spiritual worker must pass if he would be faithful to the trust committed to his charge. When have men ever welcomed a new truth, a grand discovery, a great reform? The medium of to-day stands in the place of the prophet, the apostle, the reformer of the past. He comes commissioned with a strange and undreamed-of power, and stands before the world of scepticism and unbelief. Is not this "labourer worthy of his hire"? Must he starve and want bread to eat in the midst of the far greater spiritual starvation and homelessness born of his very nature? Ask any medium you will what his material gains are in England and he will tell you that he has just enough, perhaps hardly enough, to live upon, and that he has sacrificed appointments or positions of comfort and security, because he felt compelled at any cost to be faithful to his cause. The one who has been most successful in this country, the only one who, like other men who gain more and work far less, made for himself a home of his own, and a recognised social

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position, without which it would have been impossible for his work to have been accomplished, has been the subject of these pages; and those who know him best can testify to the fact that the great ambition of his life is to win an acknowledged place for the cause of spiritualism, such as should obtain a just hearing not only for himself, but all its truest representatives.

More than this: the spiritual worker, the medium, is the instrument of the spirit-world. You do not pay, and you cannot pay, the unseen labourers, who have chosen him to convey the beautiful but misunderstood truth. They also bear many things with a patience which transcends all that is displayed among human beings. They hear their own existence doubted daily by way of reward. Men say: "It is clairvoyance;" "It is thought reading"; "It is an exalted state of the brain;" "Mesmerism," anything but what it is, and they are never weary of replying, "We *are* the spirits of your departed friends; there *is* a spirit-world; this man through whom we speak is only our medium." But every convert to the truth of spiritualism was once a sceptic; and every fresh inquirer requires the same proofs, and the same ground has to be gone over again and again, in the midst of every form of criticism, prejudice, and error. To the man whose eyes are opened, to the seer himself, what is all this? For him there is but one name for all the Protean forms of so-called explanation which have existed from the doubting Thomas of nineteen centuries ago to the Carpenters and Hammonds of the present day; and that is, *unconscious ignorance.* They do not know what he knows; they cannot see what he sees, and their rude



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materialistic attempts to apprehend something which appeals to the intuitional nature as well as the intellectual, to the higher sympathies as well as to the logical faculties, result, not once nor twice, but constantly in failure. The conditions are delicate; success cannot be commanded; a single investigation is expected to settle the question of spiritual science as it would settle no other; the very anxiety of the medium, and the eagerness or prejudice of the inquirer, create the worst atmosphere for perfect work. The wonder is that with such diametrically opposed elements, not that so little, but that so much has been accomplished. Could the *rationale* of spirit communication be perfectly understood, the sneers of sceptics would resemble the laughter of a child who is told that a message can be sent across the ocean through a piece of wire. Meanwhile, it is imperative that the work be carried on, and the best, if not the only available means at present for placing the facts of spiritualism before the public is through professional mediumship, to which many persons have been led by a power above and beyond any will or desire of their own. A really fine and flexible instrument of spiritual agency is compelled by his conditions to devote his life to that alone for which he has been carefully trained. Therefore it is that the much-tried worker in our cause has a right to the comforts of life, and yet these are made the grounds of the most senseless charges. A favourite actress or singer receives hundreds of pounds for a single night, and not a word of criticism is offered. A song is more valued by the world than the proofs of man's immortality, or than a message from an unseen friend which saves from death.

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And to depend upon private friendship may be even more disastrous than to receive a fee. English law requires mediums to starve.*

When the facts are acknowledged; when the abuse of the press has been silenced at last; when men are allowed to think for themselves, there will be no need of this perilous career of sacrifice. Men will have common sense enough, and charity enough, to give the spiritual worker who tells them what no other can, at least as much means of support as the average clergyman possesses for doing the work of what is called "saving immortal souls." They will at least shield him from the indignity of taking fees in return for his time, his strength, his very life; fees which never can repay him, let sceptics say what they will. They will give him at last a place among his fellows, he who ranks first among them all, and will no longer count him as one of the "despised and rejected" of men. The ideal of mediumship is that, unlike physic and law, it should be *non*-professional; this William Fletcher openly affirms; but the professional medium is forced by circumstances, and the needs of the hour, into the position which is the last to

* See *The State of the Law of England as it affects Public Mediums.* By M.A. (Oxon.) The charges of "false pretences," "vagrancy," "witchcraft," can all be made instruments of persecution for the most honest medium in the world in the British Isles, while conjurers, and mediums who repudiate spiritualism, acquire both popularity and money. Lately a book was published by a clairvoyante, in which the opening words of the preface were, "I have *one desire*, that the public do not confound me with the spiritualists," and a medium who calls himself a thought-reader may be received among those in whom a noble avowal excites a host of prejudices. Sceptical credulity believes in anything rather than the truth.



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be coveted, as well as the first which should be honoured, on God's earth.

I say "the first which should be honoured." For does mankind require this knowledge, and is it of value to us? Yes or no. As Paley truly observes: "He who gives me riches or honours does nothing; he who even gives me health does little in comparison with that which lays before me just grounds for expecting a restoration to life;" or in other words, a life beyond the grave. "This one truth gives order for confusion," and I may add, confidence for doubt, hope for depression, and light for darkness. Beyond all question, "the most important service that can be rendered to human life . . . . is to convey to the world authorised assurances of the reality of a future existence."

And I also say, "the last to be coveted."

An historical writer has said, in alluding to the religious persecutions in the seventeenth century, "In England the general laws against Dissenters, the statutes against Papists, and special statutes against the Quakers, put them at the mercy of every malignant informer," and men congratulate themselves while lightly passing over such a passage, that they live in an age removed from such short-sighted intolerance. But a small body of persons exists in our own day who are suffering from laws as unjust, and who are made the subjects of the same cruelty and abuse,—and they are spiritualists. They are the most helpless of men, because a long experience alone can throw light upon the varying conditions of their powers, and it is easy for any ignorant or prejudiced person who for any reason, public or personal, hates spiritualism or any one of its representa-

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tives, to present a charge of imposture which will appear plausible to the entire country. The strongest evidence is invariably excluded: the press refuses us all redress. And yet the very journals which suppress our facts and our appeals for justice, are openly acknowledging the decline of belief in "a purer world than this;" "Doubting Castle," say they, "is, as it ought to be, a dreary place, a dismal prison of souls; and till some Great Heart comes by the way and demolishes it, the shadow of its towers must lengthen over the land." And when the Great Heart does come what will they do with him? They will put him in prison. And the same writers will rejoice and make merry over the sufferings through which the truth for mankind is born.

But, whatever success awaits the truth of spiritualism in the future, and however openly it may be recognised, nothing approaching church emoluments and offices will ever again be permitted to obscure truth and impede the advancement of man. That religious teaching should be severed from all personal and class interests is a principle which has been, and is, only too well illustrated by ecclesiastical history, which plainly demonstrates that the practical reforms which human progress necessitated, and which are and ever will be a part of the religion of Christ, were wrested from "church and State" by the strong common sense and will of the people. What it is not the interest of persons to see they will not recognise, and it has never been to the interest of ecclesiastical authorities to welcome new truths, or to assist the cause of liberty. Not only is their special prerogative of authority and infallibility in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the place

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assigned to these, at stake, but their very means of living is in peril ; and their social position, palatial residences, and thousands a-year, although they may not be valued entirely for their own sake, lead the dignitaries who enjoy them to enormously over-rate their moral importance, and to assume that they wield a very much larger influence outside the clerical portion of society than the facts at all sustain.

An immense engine for the religious instruction of the masses is thus kept up at great cost, which is now accomplishing very little indeed, simply because the religion taught by priests and ministers generally does not keep pace with the knowledge or requirements of the age. An archdeacon publicly stated last year that thirty millions had been spent on church *restoration* alone, during the last thirty years, and for some facts with regard to the sale and purchase of benefices, more than six thousand of which are in private patronage, I refer the reader to the recently published report of the Royal Commissioners, which seems to be quietly ignored. Some forty thousand churches exist in Great Britain, and there is an average of eighty thousand sermons preached every Sunday, or upwards of *four millions* a-year, and what are the practical results of this huge and widespread system, which calmly demands its scores of thousands for the uprearing of one building in some little country town ? *

* It is hardly to the credit of English spiritualists, among whom are some wealthy persons, and who number many thousands, that not *one* building has been erected in London for the purpose of a Sunday spiritual service. Funds are raised and legacies left to up hold institutions requiring reform rather than preservation and

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The results are just what they used to be—a tower of defence for the weak and a barrier imposed upon the progress of the strong. The zeal of those who uphold the former is no proof of their moral worth. Devotion, as we have seen, is no test of truth, and mistaken teaching is keeping up many wrongs. For devotion, gentleness, and self-denial some of the Roman Catholic saints have been unsurpassed, and as mediums many of them were centres of remarkable spiritual power. But as great teachers, as free and independent channels for the expression of radical truths, as reformers, as the heralds of a new science, they have been useless. In the Roman Church everything has been sacrificed to sacerdotalism; her power and her growth have been centred in a system to which all were called upon to yield the submission and discipline characteristic of an army; offices, councils, decrees, traditions, "definitions of faith," have been of primary importance, and the "church miracle," or spirit manifestation, and the "ecclesiastical medium," occupy in regard to broad and world-enlightening reforms designed by the higher spirits, the same position that the religious system of Moses held to the work of Christ. The system of the one is empirical and external; of the other, radical and internal. Christ was the great embodiment of the spiritual power of his age; he was himself the development of the internal or spiritual—the Divine Man—that is, the Spiritual or Psychic Man, and the

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numerical increase, while the great truth of our age is homeless and forgotten. William Fletcher set a great and good example with regard to Steinway Hall, but the services were far from being established on the independent basis which their importance demanded.

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whole of his powers and of his method of teaching expressed the condition of his being. To finally complete that extraordinary and deeply-misunderstood work and life, to place it in its true light, to openly prove immortality, to place religion before the people as a science of humanity, as, in fact, the highest truths and principles embodied—workers are required with souls strong enough to be independent of external methods, and to be completely filled with the spiritual influx introductory to a new age. To ensure this some rough places have had to be passed, some thorny pathways, and the best and the worst among spiritualists have been brought, apparently, although not really, in a common cause, together.

But while I protest against those who possess what Paul called the "gifts of the spirit," ever pursuing the course which has given to the churches all their wealth, and which has produced such disastrous results in their long history, I maintain that the medium is worthy of our care.

If mediumship were understood, if mediums were so protected from temptation and danger that among even the least faithful, the least true-hearted of their number, no betrayal, no attempt at simulation of the gifts bestowed on them should ever occur, they would, as undoubtedly they *ought*, occupy a position towards the public in which money would be the last thing thought of, and the atmosphere of suspicion would be removed. Who are the persons who "expose" mediums? Those who are utterly inexperienced in the peculiar and varying conditions which affect the phenomena, who rush to a séance once, jump at a conclusion, send sensational letters to newspapers which suppress the

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replies, and who believe that conjuring and trickery are resorted to by all mediums as a means—a very doubtful one! —of "obtaining money," and that their superior ability was all that was required to find it out. If so, what medium would not rather become a Maskelyne or Cooke, and obtain at no other cost to themselves than the materials employed, a fortune by giving "exposing séances," in which the public thoroughly believes? Their phenomena never result in failure; their machinery is always at command; "spirits" on their premises never fail to appear; they have large audiences who applaud their ingenious efforts; and are supposed to gain a legitimate, and honourable and manly livelihood.* Contrast this with the fate of the real medium, the man whose very mission is a by-word, and who possesses the grandest truth the world has ever received. If you listen to his history, you will find that he was either born with abnormal powers, or that in the face of his own scepticism their reality was forced upon him; that he desired to live a life similar to that of his fellow-men; that he knew the ordeal which awaited him in placing himself at their mercy; that he shrank from it, would gladly have avoided it, and was bidden to face it by the spirit-world. Once launched on this career, his daily life becomes one of anxiety and struggle, increased tenfold by his own sensitive organisation. He is utterly unprotected; at any time, if a physical medium, he may find

* For the admissions of conjurers themselves, however, as to the reality of psychic phenomena, see the testimony of Houdin, Jacobs, Bellachini, and lately Kellar, (Kellar and Cunard, illusionists), whose letter in the *Indian Daily News* was reprinted in *Light* of February 25th, 1882.

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himself involved in a charge of imposture, really the result of the condition of some ignorant inquirer, and pitilessly fastened upon him, however honest, however indignant at the charge; if a trance medium, he may fail to convey a syllable of proof from the same cause, and the same cry is uttered of fraud and imposture, no matter what the accumulated evidence of others to the contrary, inquirers more careful, more just, and far more patient, persons qualified to form an opinion from the fact that they have had mediums in their own houses, tested them, searched them, exhausted ingenuity in methods for discovering any attempt at the production of the facts by human agency, and who have been finally rewarded by witnessing phenomena such as *no* human being could simulate, and which have made them spiritualists from that hour.

Moreover, until scepticism is completely broken down, a medium's gifts never can be unfolded to their highest extent; they are confined, and intended to be confined, to the mill-round of presenting the same classes of proofs day after day to all classes of minds, of working inch by inch in behalf of facts surrounded with distrust, and it is hardly a paradise for medium or for spirits. The very atmosphere in which they have been made known has been one also injurious to spirituality, and what ought to be valued as one of the most sacred hours of life has been too often degraded into a pastime, and it is scarcely to be wondered at if many mediums have failed to represent spiritualism in any true or noble light. To the casual observer who looks no deeper than the surface, there has been little evidence of unswerving moral uprightness and integrity.

It must be remembered, also, that a medium sufficiently

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gifted to stand the enormous strain of convincing strangers, protects the cause of spiritualism from the many dangers arising from ill-regulated private circles and half-developed mediumship. Through him, guided by a tried band of strong spirits who have forced him purposely to the front, directions are given, and advice, through which others are aided and protected in many difficulties, and from this point of view alone his work is invaluable. The influence of a really great medium is, in fact, incalculable, and without such the truth in its present stage would speedily wane. Those spiritualists who are so ready to criticise the slightest fault in persons who are not their instruments but those of the unseen world, resemble men who pull down the pillars of a building in which they stand themselves. They seal their own fate more surely even than that of the walls which gave them shelter.

But why, it may be asked, are mediums permitted to fail—to apparently betray their cause, when it seems all-important that it should be made known?

I recognise two great reasons for this. One is to enforce certain lessons on spiritualists themselves; to teach them to value the truth, never more to worship men through whom it is given,—the great error of the religious history of the past,—to call upon them to be faithful to the principles they acknowledge, in the face of open ridicule and contempt; and to train them to be spiritualists at heart, not phenomena-hunters, who obtain every proof of the reality of the spirit-world and refuse to do its work in return.

The other is to train mediums to lead lives of self-sacrifice, earnestness, and purity; as they are the most

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gifted so must they be the most unselfish of men; theirs is to be no easy victory, no proud position of pleasant exaltation over others; they must bear all things, suffer all things, be strong, and endure to the end. The highest and noblest mediums who are doing God's work in the world, for "many have been called and few chosen," are influenced by the Christ-sphere, and are bidden to take up their cross and follow in the Master's steps. Unjust accusations echo in the very air around them. They, and they alone, can understand what he suffered in coming as "a light into the world" which knew him not; and yet the life which has demonstrated immortality, and has been the voice speaking to all men from that age to this of a life beyond the grave, may well inspire the weary workers who labour for the same sublime end, in the present, and who realise a fact which man is as powerless to crush as he is to darken the light of day. In the eyes of those who guide the development of our little world, the most intellectual of men is but a child in knowledge and in power, and his attempts to use human laws to alter Eternal Law have invariably resulted in the vindication of the latter. Force has been in every age in vain used against truth. The very methods employed in their craft by the Jews to destroy any possible rumour of the return of Christ gave one of the strongest required proofs of his nature as the Immortal Man.

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## THE WORLD'S VERDICTS.

### CHRIST.

"He hath a devil;" "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber;" "a friend of publicans and sinners;" "a Sabbath-breaker;" "mad;" "blasphemous;" "perverting the nation;" "that deceiver."

"A thaumaturgist;" a "crucified sophist;" a "criminal."

*The Jews; Roman philosophers.*

### PAUL.

"This babbler;" a "setter forth of strange gods;" "a defiler of holy places;" "unfit to live;" a "pestilent fellow;" "mad."

*The Jews; Roman magistrates.*

### EARLY CHRISTIANS.

"Followers of a mischievous superstition;" "abjects and vile publicans;" "impious impostors;" "despicable fanatics;" "illiterate clowns;" "fools;" "deceivers;" "wizards and sorcerers;" "atheists;" "detestable criminals;" etc.

*Roman contemporaries.*

### REFORMERS AND SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERERS.

"Vile heretics;" "fools;" "immoral persons;" "atheists;" "sorcerers;" "leaguers with the devil;" "magicians;" "conjurers;" "Antichrists;" "false prophets;" "liars;" "diabolical innovators;" "fanatics;" "seducers from the faith;" etc.

*Priests and Schoolmen.*

### MEDIUMS AND SPIRITUALISTS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

"Fools;" "deluded idiots;" "victims of hallucination;" "mad persons;" "blasphemers;" "demon-possessed;" "sorcerers;" "impostors;" "vulgar cheats;" "tricksters;" "infamous hypocrites;" "convicts;" etc.

*Scientific and religious bigots and the popular Press.*

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CHRISTIANITY OF MEN.

"They have not known the Father nor me."

I WRITE the following pages, and include them in the life of William Fletcher, in deference to an imperious demand—one to which their contents are, indeed, but the mere outline of a response—from the unseen messengers and workers in behalf of a new era.

It is my design to show, by an unquestionable appeal to facts in this brief chapter, that the spirit of Christ has rested on the heroic martyrs of all ages for progress and reform, and that the system of ecclesiasticism, and the union of church and State, so far from representing the sublime and eternal principles he taught, have outraged them by superstitions and cruelties which have been a curse to mankind; which formed a hell in the past, which have degraded religion in every nation in Europe, and which still survive in diminished forms, and exercise a deadly influence on the spiritual development of man, at the present hour.

When Stephen yielded up his last breath on a charge of blasphemy, uttering the divine prayer of Christ that they who murdered him might be forgiven; when the faithful followers of Christ perished, some at Rome, some at Alexandria, some at Jerusalem; when the early Christian martyrs stood in the arena at Rome and faced tortures and death in their most terrible forms for the sake of the truth which their souls had recognised, because by a heaven-

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decreed law no truth can ever be born in vain—Christianity was a free religion. The little band of men called Christians who were torn by wild beasts, burnt in public gardens, tortured with all the ingenuity that human fiends could devise by command of emperors who were ruling a kingdom in the last stage of its decay, and who were many of them as infamous in life as they were perverted in intellect and moral sense—were men who possessed free minds. If they shared the Calvary of Christ they also shared the spirit which impelled the beautiful and fearless utterances by the shores of Galilee, on the brow of Olivet, and within the very precincts of the doomed Jerusalem, utterances which were spoken outside the synagogue and the temple, above and beyond the authority of the priests, and which appealed to the reason and the conscience of the human throngs who heard them. Such a religion as this could indeed brave death. Such a religion as this, which had not only taught truth, but "brought immortality to light," might well have inspired its martyrs, and one would have said it ought to have rung around the wide world. But it was otherwise ordained. Christ told his disciples that "his kingdom was not of this world"; and the religion he taught was one which appealed to the most divine instincts in the soul of man; it was to be woven into no creeds; to be used as no instrument of priestly dominion; to be a weapon of no state; to be the possession of no particular class of persons. It was a great *spiritual power*, and it was born into the world when it needed it, to be henceforth kept alive through the heroic struggles and sufferings of men who, step by step, pressed forward in the path which had been pointed

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out by an unerring hand, till the hour should come when it should dominate the world in a liberty of the spirit which should be for ever above both church and creed.

Nearly two thousand years ago, Christ entered the sphere of human life on a divine mission, which was two-fold : some of the truths he taught had been uttered before, but he placed them before men in a higher light and lived them out ; the greatest truth of all, the immortality of man, had been dimly recognised by other races and by other teachers ; Christ *demonstrated it.* His life, including his power over matter, his spiritual insight, and his victory over death, was lived in strict accordance with laws which operated from his birth, and to which in the course of human progress, the race of man, as foretold by John, his "beloved disciple," will eventually be subject. It was a great prophecy. The life and works of Christ were no more a violation of natural law than the life of civilised man is a violation of the law which once forbade any form of existence higher than that of the saurian. In the latter case the spiritual is developing, subject to planetary conditions : in the former it was developed, and overcame them.

But, living so far before the era of the immortal race ; being its "first fruits," he was the chosen "strong son of God," and he was, and he is, the Father's great messenger to this world. He is apart from all other teachers, prophets, and messengers, and he is, and ever will be the chosen Saviour of our race.* He died to demonstrate immortality ;

* Had the nature of Christ been clearly understood, it would have shewn the futility of endeavouring to personate him. The "false Christs" arose about the time of the destruction of



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he lived to speak truth. His spirit was in harmony with the Father, and he attained to that high plane which lived in purity of thought as well as deed. A "greater than Solomon" indeed stood at last within the walls of Jerusalem; a mighty work was indeed accomplished there.

Nothing could be more opposed than the work of Moses and that of Christ, and it was easy to see that the followers of the one could never accept the other. The one was a lawgiver, regulating real and fancied morality by minute external details, and severe and often barbarous punishments; the other furnished a motive-power of action in pure spiritual life, teaching that wrong-doing brought its own punishment, virtue its own reward; the one was an instrument of the Hebrew Jehovah; the other the messenger of a God of love; the one offered "sacrifices for sins" with the blood of animals; the other "did the Father's will," and for a godlike truth sacrificed himself; the one was silent about a future life; the other was a spirit clothed with a body only half material; the one be-

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Jerusalem, both of which events he foretold. I should add here that although the Epistles, so far as history is concerned, seem to confine their allusions to current events, such as practices among the Christians, or that terrible aspect of the Roman world which made Paul denounce the "rulers of darkness," and "the man of sin," (Caligula set up a temple in honour of his own divinity, and Nero outraged humanity by his crimes), the Apocalypse is a vision of the whole of the first Christian era, and points out the struggle, a veritable "battle of Armageddon," between kings and the Papacy, and the martyrs of Christ, and finally, the era of the Christ-reign, the immortal race, and the open communion between the spiritual and material worlds. The declaration that "death shall be no more" refers to a development of the human race as yet unattained, and has no possible reference to events of the past.

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longed largely to his age and to the earth; the other to all time and to the world of spirit; the one gave death-sentences and died; the other spoke of a life that was eternal, and triumphed at last over all that makes it possible that man should die. The religion of Christ was and is a religion of virtue, self-sacrifice, charity, liberty, and love; of outspoken denunciation of all wrongs, no matter in what interests committed; of perfect trust and freedom; of uncompromising attachment to human good, of embodied perfection. It is a religion of *life*. This is the gospel of immortality against which were an angel to preach, he would, indeed, be accursed.

Let us contrast it with the religion of men.

More than a century and a half had elapsed after the return of Christ to the spiritual world, before the idea was fully entertained that the various gospels and the writings of the apostles were of "divine authority" in the sense now popularly understood. The evidence that such was the case is now too well-known and too complete to be met with denial. The gospels and the epistles comprised many more books than are admitted in the canon of Scripture, which includes at the present time more than one epistle, the authenticity of which is known to be doubtful; and the so-called "scriptural authority" of a later period simply rested on the speedily-acknowledged best written testimony of those most closely related to Christ, or who had laboured most zealously in behalf of the work he had accomplished.* The very differences among the apostles (Acts

* I have more than once quoted from the Gospel called after John. Parts of it unmistakably shew the Christ-spirit whoever was its author.



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xv. 39 ; Gal. ii. 11) show that the little gatherings called churches at Corinth, Galatia, or Philippi, had no conception of a series of infallible dogmas. Their very errors (1 Cor. vi. 6, 7, 8 ; xi. 21) prove their human imperfections. A book, a man, a church, that could not err, was an idea alien to the spirit of the time, which was struggling to follow, on firm and broad principles, though at a great distance, in the footsteps of the Master. There is no question that Paul kept Christianity alive, but in his letters it exhibits certain marked differences to the Christianity of Christ. He rose to it in his realisation of the proof of spiritual life given in the re-appearance of Jesus, in his undaunted courage in declaring him to be the long-foretold messenger who was to appear among the Jews, which set Jerusalem " in an uproar," and for which he was made a " spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men ;" in his fearless and uncompromising determination to keep the new light free from all connection with the old, useless rites of Judaism believed to have been God-ordained ; in his truly inspired chapter on immortality: he fell below it in his silence with regard to slavery, which was one of the most demoralising of the Roman institutions, in his Jewish ideas of a propitiatory sacrifice to God rather than a divine sacrifice for man,* and in his incidentally expressed views on the nature of

* It is only fair, however, to state that this idea is very secondary except in his supposed but quite unproved letter to the Hebrews, probably some Jewish converts who would naturally be more ready to accept and sustain a form of Christianity in harmony with the sacrificial system of Moses. The more spiritual interpretation of passages like " redemption through Christ's blood," &c., would simply be the light given through the self-sacrifice of his death, and I refer the thoughtful reader to the records of the life

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womanhood. But he never dreamed of worship, or of standing in the place of God, and his very arguments are often lengthy appeals to the minds of others, which soared far beyond the deep-rooted prejudices of his age.

Had these facts been openly acknowledged, and had the founders of the so-called Christian Church of a later date taught the main principles of the new religion in freedom, and in the faith which could recognise that they required no human laws to uphold them, the terrible history of bigotry and suffering which has been the consequence of this first error would never remain to rise up in judgment against her now. From the time that a final and authoritative canon of the New Testament was established, with a view to place the truths which had been given through some great and good human souls in a position which God alone can ever occupy, ecclesiastical power arose. Moreover, the desire to illustrate the gospels by the Pentateuch, to connect the new truth with the old forms, with the legends of the fall of man and the idea of an atonement, completely overshadowed the whole spirit of the mission of Christ, and to a large extent, the heroic preaching of Paul. Immortality and spiritual freedom were almost forgotten; death and submission to authority, scriptural and hierarchical, were everywhere dwelt upon. Moses, the "types," and the priesthood, eclipsed the light of the new message, and Genesis was ransacked by the Fathers to furnish reasons for, and illustrations of, the life and teaching they failed to understand. Tertullian defended the

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of Christ himself for a true and rational explanation of the grand object of the work which culminated in the crucifixion, which has been so terribly obscured and degraded by the popular theology.

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Christian faith; in a brief period Augustine dominated it. It has furnished a remarkable answer to the so-called philosophical statement that man is the author of his own religion. In one sense alone is this true, but that is in his very *failure* to appreciate the highest truths manifested to him until he is mentally and morally on a plane to grasp them. Does the North American Indian accept the civilisation of Boston or New York, or the savage of Australia the new life of its colonial cities? Christianity was unquestionably received, but it was popularised only by expanding on man's level, and not Christ's. On this plane, Judaism in another form was preserved, something in common was found even in Paganism, and opposition in Rome, the great centre of early Christian activity, was rapidly broken down. But, in reality, it had only assumed another form. The spiritual religion of Christ was obscured by the most wearisome disputes among the bishops of the early church on points of doctrine, and out of these disputes arose pious frauds,* pious errors, and finally the pious use of physical force. Council after council was held to prove or disprove by the vote of an intriguing majority the "consubstantiality of the Son with the Father," and controversy after controversy took place between Arians and Athanasians, each decision as a rule being reversed by the following one, till at last, in the year 325, at the Council of

* That interpolations in the original scriptural MSS. were made at different times is a fact known to scholars. On the whole, they may be of no great importance, but they prove a principle. 1 John v. 7 is an admitted addition to the original text. The Council of Trent, in 1545, declared the Vulgate version of Jerome in Latin, issued in 405, to be authentic. Wycliffe translated from the Vulgate; Tyndale from the Greek original.

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Nice, and in 381, at the Council of Constantinople, the doctrine of the "Trinity" finally triumphed, and the pure and spiritual Mary became "the Mother of God." The original Nicene Creed anathematised all who dared to differ from it, and Constantine decreed that whoever refrained from destroying the works of Arius should be put to death. In the fifth century it had become a dogma to dispute which was to imperil the soul.

The influence of Platonism, the encouragement and the territory bestowed by the worldly-minded Constantine, and the decision of the Nicæan Council, all aided powerfully to pave the way for the establishment of a system which rapidly culminated in the papal power of Rome. To quote to any extent from the Fathers, and to show the materialism which had already converted religion into mere theology, would only weary the reader. I need only state that the saints, as they were designated, Augustine and Fulgentius, both declared that no one could be saved outside the "Church," and that all Jews, heretics, and schismatics would depart into eternal fire; and so far did error develope mental slavery, that until the ninth century not a person existed who disputed the "eternal damnation" of infants born unbaptised. Disputes about transubstantion, the incarnation, the sacraments, predestination, election, original sin, the state of "the dead," and the "atonement," well nigh blotted out the mission of love lived out in Palestine but a brief period before, and educated the minds of men for the follies and the crimes which were destined to rise to their height in the Middle Ages.

The union of church and State soon produced a system which taught religion at the point of the sword. The

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quarrels of the bishops about "apostolic succession," the polemical wranglings, and mutual excommunications of those who had the presumption to style themselves "God's elect;" the fierce and often bloody contests which arose on the occasion of a vacant see; the rising worship—nothing less—of the "Virgin Mary;" the increasing wealth of the church, and at last the complete repression of science and philosophy owing to the influence of the Fathers, all united to create that ecclesiastical authority which can only exist side by side with ignorance and error. It bore the inevitable fruits. At the instance of the clergy, the Italian wars were undertaken under Justinian, through which millions of lives were sacrificed, and a brief period later beheld the fruitless crusades, which lasted for centuries, and during which some millions of human lives were again wasted to rescue the *tomb* of Christ from Mahomedan dominion. When Jerusalem was finally taken by Godfrey de Bouillon, all, without distinction of age or sex, were put to the sword, and the licentiousness and cruelty which accompanied the "holy wars" which were successively urged on European princes by the popes, had already linked the name of Christianity to deeds of barbarism and blood. The establishment of papal infallibility, the love of theological dogmas of no value to either reason or religion, the veneration of relics—thigh-bones and thumbs—inevitably amounting with the ignorant masses to actual worship, even where there were several of the same kind; the adoration of saints and the early martyrs, the phenomena of pilgrimages, penances, indulgences and their sale, spangled dolls, rosaries, genuflexions, absolutions, Latin services, perpetual miracles and shrine-wonders similar to the pagan marvels, increased

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the rising tide of superstition. Philosophy yielded to metaphysical subtleties, and science gave place to legends of the saints.

The progress of the monastic movement is known to every reader of history. In the first instance it was doubtless prompted by a spirit of reaction against the profligacy of the age, and a desire to escape persecution, but it rapidly degenerated into a system which was not only a rebellion against the divine laws of God written in nature, but which itself became a fertile source of misery and widespread immorality. In the fourth century thousands of hermits and monks began to overspread Egypt, Palestine, and Italy, some of whom can be compared to no class of men so completely as the Hindoo fakirs. They fled to the desert, abandoned every tie of affection and kindred, and dwelt alone in caves and solitary places. Their lives consisted of a series of penances; washing was discountenanced, and half-starved, and covered with filth and vermin, these would-be saints in their "zeal for the church" would speedily have dragged back human progress to the state it must have exhibited in the age of the original cave-men, had not other influences intervened to favour the more gregarious forms of devotional life established in the monasteries. The monastic life of which this was the commencement speedily developed itself all over Europe.

A philosophical view of these facts will doubtless recognise that the ascetic principle has manifested itself among the most varied races of men, and that the Essene, the Brahmin, and the Cynic, alike illustrate the tendency, but the point which claims our attention is its enormous and, at last, disastrous influence over those who professed

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to be followers of a Master who spent his life among the people, and whose whole method of teaching was opposed to seclusion. The devotion of many of the earlier anchorites and monks is unquestioned, but like all piety which refuses to recognise reason, it became, and very rapidly, a stronghold of both superstition and vice. A Columba was the exception; a fanatic and ignorant mendicant, or a dissolute friar, the rule.

For some five hundred years during the Dark Ages, the clergy reigned supreme, and owing to the ignorance and credulity which everywhere existed, what was called "heresy," the result of the love of inquiry and the free use of reason, could hardly be said to exist. The priests were the guardians of the scanty knowledge of the age, and learning possessed by laymen was considered dangerous. The papacy had by this time become firmly established: the popes were styled "vicars of Christ;" papal supremacy and infallibility were undisputed, and from the sixth to the tenth centuries there were only some three or four men in all Europe who dared to think for themselves. What the lives of those were who occupied the papal chair from the eighth to the eleventh centuries is too well known to need comment. It suffices to say that they were uniformly immoral, and at times infamous. From the eighth to the twelfth centuries ecclesiastical immorality likewise reached its height in the monasteries, and the increasing wealth and power of the clergy made them a most formidable enemy to human progress. Thousands of women became dissolute owing to the forced celibacy of the clergy; in England, the monastic lands amounted to half the kingdom, and in other countries the proportion was even larger. The church now

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possessed the temporal power to enforce "conversion," and this the popes relentlessly did all in their power to accomplish. Excommunications and anathemas struck terror into the hearts of kings, and held whole countries in subjection; emperors held the stirrups of the pope, it was considered an honour to kiss his feet, and the Holy See, under Innocent III., became a kingdom, which attempted to rule the entire continent. In the year 992 hardly anyone in Rome knew the first elements of learning; in Spain, in the time of Charlemagne, not one priest in a thousand could write a common letter, and in England not one understood the prayers he repeated, or could translate Latin into his mother tongue. The Latin which was at one time familiar to all, was in the eleventh and twelfth centuries hardly understood. Laymen had been taught to look upon the Scriptures in the place of Deity; they were now considered too holy even to be read. The zeal which could incite men to slay their fellow-creatures for the sake of the possession of a spot of earth far too sacred to be associated with strife and bloodshed, was exchanged for the zeal which impelled their descendants to torture and murder all who ventured to dispute the dogmas of the church. How far removed already from the heroic spirit of those early Christian martyrs who suffered under the Roman persecutions of the first centuries, was the Latin church, will now be seen. That church itself took the place of the pagan power, and the martyrs for truth and liberty, their real successors, were those who perished, no longer at the bidding of a Roman emperor, but, at her unhallowed hands. The spirit of St. Augustine and the Levitical law of the Hebrew nation, with its

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examples of barbarous severity, seemed everywhere to triumph.

In the thirteenth century, two mendicant friars, St. Dominic and St. Francis, who denounced the general wealth and corruption of the monastic societies, founded two new orders, and while the latter laid the foundation-stone of the Reformation, the former instituted that tribunal which more than all other ecclesiastical institutions has outraged the very name of Christianity, and become a byword for all ages,—called the "Holy Inquisition." In 1208, Pope Innocent III. firmly established it for the suppression of heresy, and the story of human agony and human brutality which followed is one which no pen can ever attempt to record. The spirit of which it was the culmination had, however, as I have shown, manifested itself centuries before, and without further preface, I turn, beginning with the earlier ones, to some of the victims of the "Christian Church."

In the year 385 of the Christian era, the Bishops Ursatius and Ithacus, put to death some Priscillianists for "heresy."

In 414 Hypatia was brutally murdered by the monks of Cyril, at Alexandria, for teaching secular philosophy, and the very flesh torn from her bones. The era of mental slavery, the foundations of which had been laid by the Fathers, had begun.

In 782, at the bidding of Pope Stephen III., Charlemagne beheaded in one day between four and five thousand persons at Verden, for refusing to be baptised, and Pope Leo III. crowned him emperor of the West under the title of "the most pious Augustus, crowned by God." Shortly afterwards

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Charlemagne burnt some persons at the request of the pope, for preferring the Ambrosian to the Gregorian chant.

In 1007, several persons were burnt alive at Orleans for heresy.

In 1134, Peter de Brueys was burnt in Languedoc for denying "infant baptism," and "transubstantiation."

In 1155, Arnaldo de Brescia was strangled for uttering the "heretical and damnable doctrine" that ecclesiastics ought to subsist on voluntary alms.

In 1160, the Waldenses, a body of reformers headed by Peter Waldo, who strenuously opposed the papal pretensions, underwent a cruel persecution, during which numbers were burnt alive. From first to last, some three thousand of the Waldenses perished in France, including children of tender years.

In 1209, the Albigenses, another body of reformers who had long adhered to a less corrupted form of Christianity, were massacred for heresy at Bezières. At the lowest computation 30,000 persons were murdered, and at Lavaur 400 persons were burnt at one time. One Protestant earl in Provence was suffocated, and his wife, daughter, and sister burnt in one fire; another was hanged with eighty other persons. The province of Languedoc was wasted. Pope Innocent III. bestowed indulgences on all who undertook the crusade, and these unhappy people suffered during a period of sixty years, their descendants, the Huguenots, inheriting their legacy of martyrdom together with their Protestant faith.

In the thirteenth century the conflict between theology and freedom deepened, and assumed a more definite form.

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In 1215, it was decreed in council that all rulers should swear to exterminate those branded as heretics by the church, and the pope claimed universal spiritual authority. Auricular confession was formally instituted, and in 1208, or a year or two afterwards, the tribunal of the "Holy Inquisition" was established, and "Saint" Dominic appointed Inquisitor-General.

In England, during William the Conqueror's reign, the nobles and bishops united to tax and torture the people, and the whole country was laid waste by robbery and oppression. Magna Charta was subsequently denounced by Pope Innocent III. The Jews, in the reign of Richard I., John, and Henry III., were butchered, tortured and robbed, and in 1290, they were expelled from England and their property confiscated.

Louis IX., styled "saint," for his zeal in persecution, permitted a monk to establish a tribunal for the suppression of heretics, through the agency of which many were put to death. One hundred and eighty-three "heretics" and their pastor were burnt together in a pen before the archbishop of Rheims, and in 1249, eighty heretics were burnt at Agens, in the presence of Raymond of Toulouse.

In 1222, a synod at Oxford caused a heretic to be burnt.

In 1267, Roger Bacon was imprisoned for fourteen years, and accused of "being in league with the devil," for his scientific researches.

In 1300, Sagarelli, the founder of a peculiar sect resembling the modern Shakers, was burnt at Parma.

In 1302, Dante's *Monarchy* was burnt, and himself

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sentenced to the same fate. He was compelled to live in exile, and the pope excommunicated him after his death.

In 1327, Cecco d'Ascoli was burnt alive for asserting the existence of the Antipodes, and Orcagna represented him in a painting in the flames of hell! A bull of Pope Alexander VI. had proclaimed that the earth was flat, and the theory of the Antipodes was accounted a wicked and damnable doctrine.

In 1348, numbers of Jews were killed in Europe, accused of being the cause of a fatal epidemic, and were mercilessly hunted from land to land.

In 1390, the Catholics of Seville massacred 4,000 Jews, through the influence of Hernando Martinez, a priest, who personally directed it. They had been universally condemned to slavery. In the reign of Isabella they were finally banished, after enduring terrible sufferings.

In 1393, 150 Vaudois in the Val Louise were burnt by the Inquisition at the instance of Borelli; and in the same century eighty at Embrun.

In England, the Lollards, disciples of Wycliffe, underwent cruel imprisonment and tortures. In 1401 William Sawtre was burnt; in 1410, William Thorpe, by the archbishop; in 1414 thirty more were hanged and burnt; and in 1417, Sir John Oldcastle (Lord Cobham) was roasted alive in a horrible manner for "heresy." Wycliffe, himself, was called "the devil's instrument," for his translation of the Scriptures; and the Council of Constance, in 1415, ordered his corpse to be disinterred, and his remains were finally thrown into a river.

In 1416, John Huss, also a follower of Wycliffe, was basely betrayed and burnt at Constance, notwithstanding a

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safe-conduct from the Emperor Sigismund, because it was "unlawful to keep faith with a heretic." He refused to recant, saying, "I appeal to Christ," and passed away in prayer.

Jerome of Prague shared the same fate, also, at the same place.

In 1421, John Zisca, general of the Hussites, who avenged the murder of Huss, persecuted the sect of the Beghards, some of whom were put to the sword, and the remainder burnt.

In 1431, the inspired defender of her country against a cruel invasion, Jeanne d'Arc, was burnt alive at Rouen, at the instance of the bishop of Beauvais, her own countryman, for "heresy and sorcery," by the Inquisition, and people and priests alike assembled together to see the show. Not one of those for whom she fought had the courage to protest against this barbarous murder of a girl only nineteen years of age, and the unfortunate Jeanne, like many another martyr, died, calling upon that Christ whose holy name has been more outraged by priests than by any other class of human beings.*

In 1488 the whole of the inhabitants of Val Louise were suffocated in a cavern by the papal legate. Some three thousand of the Vaudois perished.

In 1498 Jerome Savonarola was hanged for sedition and

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* Attempts have recently been made to discredit the martyrdom of Jeanne d'Arc, probably for the credit of both church and State in France, but the evidence is too strong. During the re-action which followed only a few years after her death, France would have eagerly seized on any substantial proof that she was guiltless of one of the darkest crimes which stains her history.

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"heresy" at Florence, and his body burnt. His adherents were burnt alive.

In Spain, during the eighteen years of Torquemada's ministry, the Inquisition punished upwards of 105,000 persons at the lowest estimate, of whom no less than 8,800 were burnt alive; torture was inflicted in secluded vaults, and on mere suspicion, and the accused were without defence. In Andalusia alone, in one year, it put to death 2,000 Jews, besides 17,000 who underwent some form of punishment less horrible than the stake. The total number of victims burnt is estimated by Llorente at the incredible number of 40,000! Even supposing the statement as to the actual number exaggerated, it amounts to nothing as regards a mitigation of the facts. A large number of Jews were burnt alive at once to do honour to the marriage of a count in the Plaza of Pamplona, and the human bonfire, which illumined the whole place, must indeed have literally realised the orthodox idea of a hell. Thousands of "heretics" were sent to the galleys, and the property of the sufferers was universally confiscated, and their families left destitute. The church grew rich through her pious crusade. In this country, indeed, she was supreme, and miracles at this period, in particular, were of constant occurrence. The spirit of Antichrist has never been without its "lying wonders," "Christian" as well as pagan, and priestcraft has never lacked the delusions which have kept it alive. These cruelties, these frightful spectacles of human beings roasted alive for the crime of thinking for themselves, or adhering to the faith of their fathers, were perpetrated with every circumstance of cold-blooded barbarity that could inflict agony on the victims and their families, and terrify or harden



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the hearts of the spectators. The *autos-da-fé* of heretic-burning would take place at a royal marriage, with the king and queen sitting on a platform; the condemned were dressed in a hideous costume, with high paste-board caps, on which devils were painted and representations of future torture; music accompanied the cavalcade, and mass was celebrated in the presence of the assembled crowd. The chief inquisitor was wont to complete the scene of crime and blasphemy by bearing with him the gospels containing the life of Christ!

When it is remembered that these inquisitors were almost all men of otherwise moral and devout life, and that the crimes they committed were perpetrated in the supposed interests of religion, a belief which absolutely made Francis I. kneel down while "heretics" were burning, and publicly ask the blessing of heaven on himself and the nation, it should act as a world-wide warning for all time against the idea which even now exists like a upas-tree in the churches and chapels of all countries and denominations, that truth is upheld by pious bigotry, and that mental slavery is acceptable to God.

Spain cast her dark shadow over Europe. In 1568 a sentence of the "Holy Office" condemned all the inhabitants of the Netherlands to death as heretics—some three millions of men, women, and children! Fifty thousand of them were put to death by Charles V., and nearly half as many again during the reign of his son. And to pass on to a later date, in 1611 the Moors were expelled from Spain to the number of about one million persons. Upwards of 100,000 suffered death at the instance of the archbishop of Valencia, who bade the government root

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them out "as David had rooted out the Philistines, and Saul the Amalekites." Industry, no less than science, well-nigh perished in Spain, and the waste places caused by wholesale depopulation became the strongholds of banditti which have never been exterminated. At least 170,000 Jews were expelled during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Reformation was entirely suppressed, and the country overwhelmed with monasteries and convents, thousands of which were established during the reign of Charles V.

In France, in 1525, Jean Leclerc was burnt alive for preaching the gospel at Metz, and Jacques Pavent and Louis de Berquin at Paris. The tongue of the latter was pierced in order that he should not speak in his last hour.

In 1534, twenty men and one woman were burnt alive at Paris for having printed or sold the books of Luther, and for "heresy."

In 1539, a number of persons who ate meat on Fridays also suffered at the stake.

In 1545, a massacre of the Vaudois of Provence, took place, accompanied by inhuman cruelties. Towns and villages were burnt, and with them numbers of the unfortunate Huguenots. The fair land of France was desolated with the blackened ruins of Protestant homes.

In 1556, perished also Jean Escalle and Pierre de Lavaur, at Toulouse, and many others.

In 1560, Palissy was seized for "heresy," and would have been condemned to the stake but for his skill in pottery, which gained for him a titled and influential protector. He was, however, again arrested, and imprisoned in the Bastille, where he died.



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In 1563, the massacre of Vassy took place, by the Duke of Guise, in which sixty persons were killed, out of some hundreds of Protestants who were engaged in service in a large barn. The clergy compared the duke to Moses, who exterminated "all who had bowed the knee to the golden calf"! Protestant churches were destroyed, and the Huguenots were murdered also at Paris, Senlis, Amiens, Meaux, Tours, and many other places.

In 1572, the massacre of St. Bartholomew took place, during which a large number of Protestants were murdered in Paris, as well as many in the provinces.* For this Pope Gregory XIII. is said to have ordered public rejoicings and thanksgivings, and the celebration of "high mass."

In Great Britain similar deeds of blood had been committed.

In 1528, Patrick Hamilton was burnt in Scotland for adhering to the "filthy Lutheran heresy."

In 1532, Thomas Bilney, the friend of Latimer, was burnt for becoming a Protestant.

In 1534, in Scotland, near Leith, the bishops burnt two Scotch gentlemen for "heresy."

In 1535, in England, fourteen persons of the reformed faith were burnt for rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation, and several clergymen who adhered to Rome, including Fisher, bishop of Rochester, and also Sir

* Reference is made to a fast held in memory of this massacre in an old register of the Huguenot refugees in the church of "God's House" at Southampton. It is there stated that twelve or thirteen thousand were killed in one night, "the 24th of August last." Various numbers have been stated, and I therefore refrain from quoting any.

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Thomas More, executed, for refusing the oath of supremacy.

In 1536, William Tyndale was strangled and his body burnt for translating the Scriptures.

In 1538, John Lambert was burnt at Smithfield, and several others shortly afterwards.

In 1546, the heroic Anne Askew perished for embracing the reformed religion. Bonner sentenced her to the rack; every limb in her body was dislocated, and she was finally burnt alive, firmly refusing to "recant," with four others, at Smithfield.

In the same year George Wishart was also executed at St. Andrews, at the instance of Cardinal Beatoun, who beheld his martydom from the castle-wall which became the scene of his own murder.

In 1550, Joan Bocher was burnt, and in 1551 Van Paris, at the instigation of Cranmer, for entertaining "heterodox" ideas concerning Christ.

In England, in little more than three years during the reign of Mary, some 284 persons perished at the stake, including women and even children, and the bishops Bonner, Gardiner, and others personally conducted the persecution. Hooper, Ridley, Latimer, Rogers and Cranmer were among those burnt for denying the papal supremacy and transubstantiation. They died with words of heroism on their lips. Public thanksgivings were rendered for the restoration of Catholicism, and Mary was styled "Defender of the Faith."

What that "faith" was may be gathered from the statement of Cardinal Cajetan in his controversy with Luther, that "one drop of Christ's blood being sufficient

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to redeem the whole human race, the remaining quantity that was shed in the garden and upon the cross, was left as a legacy to the church, to be a treasure from whence indulgences were to be drawn and administered by the Roman pontiffs." Is it, however, so far below the "salvation of blood" still taught by Protestant religious materialists? The gospel of death has been preached instead of the gospel of life, and has ever produced its own fruits.

The spirit of persecution and bigotry had survived the Reformation, however. The fatal union of church and State lived on.

In 1575, two Anabaptists were burnt in the reign of Elizabeth, and in her reign also 200 Roman Catholics were executed. The clergy called upon her to put to death the "false prophets and sorcerers."

In England and Scotland alone, it has been estimated that more than two millions of human beings were imprisoned, hanged, burnt, drowned, beheaded, and tortured for their religious opinions, in the course of little more than two hundred years, and in the latter part of the seventeenth century no less than 3,192 persons were executed for so-called "witchcraft."

In Charles II.'s reign, Sharpe, archbishop of St. Andrew's, the inventor of the instrument of torture called "the Boot," filled the prisons with men and women who were tortured, transported, and hunted from their homes for "heresy." It was death to preach in the fields, and a company of brutal soldiers, commanded by Turner, inflicted the most horrible sufferings upon the unfortunate Protestants. They were beaten, wounded, stripped, scorched before fires; the women were insulted; and king, bishops, and clergy

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united together to effect their purpose. The clergy presented James with a list of 300 of the aristocracy, who were accused as "heretics," with a view to accomplish their execution. And James II., at the instigation of Barillon, had the book written by the Huguenot pastor, Claude, which contained an account of the Protestant sufferings in France, burnt before the Royal Exchange.

On the continent the story of ecclesiastical crime was carried on. In 1600 Giordano Bruno was burnt alive by the Inquisition, at Rome, after a cruel imprisonment of several years. His offence was a belief in the Kopernican theory, which he taught, and sympathy with the reformed doctrines. He believed, also, in the infinity of the universe, and the existence of the Divine Essence in all things. He met his cruel death with miraculous firmness, and turned away his head from the crucifix, which had indeed become a symbol of crime resembling that which had sacrificed the Man of Sorrows centuries before.

In 1615 Galileo was brought before the Inquisition at Rome, menaced with torture, compelled to "recant" his discoveries, and imprisoned. The church had decided geometry was "of the devil;" bishops and priests impressively warned their flocks against every fresh discovery in science; the epithets of "infidel," "atheist," and "sorcerer" were among the mildest terms applied to men who endeavoured to teach truths acknowledged now in every school-book, and a passage in the Psalms of David or the Book of Job was supposed to settle the whole of the solar system. To read the work of Kopernik was to "risk damnation," and his method was solemnly condemned by Luther as well as the pope. When Galileo was released

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from papal persecution he did not long survive, and died broken-hearted and blind.

In 1629 Vanini was burnt at Toulouse on a charge of atheism in his work entitled "Dialogues Concerning Nature."

But the mind of man was not to be crushed by even such tyranny as this, a tyranny which in these days it is almost impossible to realise. The Reformation had begun, and with it the growth of a liberty which has far out-grown ecclesiasticism, and has dealt a death-blow to the spirit which made even Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Beza, and Knox uphold persecution, describe the ancient philosophers as "frogs" and "locusts," and which has stained Protestestanism, like Catholicism, with crime. The reformed churches commenced their career with the deadly error that "salvation" could only be had within their own pale, and a victim to this spirit soon arose. Early in the sixteenth century Michael Servetus, a Spaniard, beheld a spectacle which may be witnessed now—the pope borne aloft above the heads of the people, who strove to kiss even his slipper, fell down before him, and treated him as a god.* The sight aroused his indignation, and ere long he stood forth as a reformer far in advance of Luther or of Calvin, one inspired with the beautiful idea that the "eternal and indivisible God lives in all creation," and that the "spirit of God breathes throughout nature." He rejected utterly the dark doctrine of total depravity, and rightly held that the genuine idea of Christianity had been obscured at a very early date. In a very short time he was imprisoned, and

* Paulo V. actually styled himself Vice-Deo. One is reminded of Caligula of some sixteen centuries before.

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basely betrayed by his fellow-reformer, John Calvin, first to the merciless Inquisition, and then to the council at Geneva. In 1553 he was roasted alive at the stake, together with his books. The faggots were purposely selected of green wood, and for a whole half-hour—some say far longer—this heroic martyr was bravely silent amid his torture till death came to release his spirit. His last words were, "I have performed no action deserving death; nevertheless, I pray God to forgive my enemies and persecutors. Jesus, thou son of the Eternal God, have compassion on me!" All Europe for a time applauded this crime, except Castillio and Socinius, and these were pursued with invectives as "emissaries of Satan," by the man whose personal enmity for a reformer who opposed him led him to a revenge which covers his name with infamy.* Which of the two think you, reader, was nearest to Christ—*Michael Servetus or John Calvin?*

The Thirty Years War in Germany in behalf of religious liberty cost millions of lives, and desolated the land. At the fall of Magdeburg men, women, and children were slaughtered, and the city was reduced to ashes.

In 1655 the "Easter massacre" of the Vaudois, in La Tour, took place, conducted by the Duke of Savoy, and continued for more than a week, accompanied by great cruelties.

In 1685 the edict of Nantes was revoked by Louis XIV. at the instigation of the clergy, and a million of the Huguenots were killed, imprisoned, sent to the galleys, or driven out of France. The persecution of the Protestants continued for a period of half a century. In Languedoc

* See *Servetus and Calvin.* By R. Willis, M.D. Kegan Paul Trench, and Co., London.

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alone 10,000 persons were hanged, burnt, or broken upon the wheel, and at least 100,000 perished from the barbarities inflicted upon them. Women were insulted; numbers were confined in dungeons; knives and red-hot pincers were employed to force the "heretics to recant." Bossuet and Massillon lauded the revocation as "the work of God," and on his death the body of Louis was covered with relics of "the true cross." Du Chayla, the arch-priest, invented the "squeezers," and Clement XI., in 1703, pronounced "absolute and general remission of sins" to all who joined in "exterminating the cursed heretics," as Pope Clement VIII. had done more than two centuries before. Children were torn from their parents by the priests and sent to Catholic schools and nunneries, and immense quantities of Bibles and Testaments were publicly destroyed. If the dying refused unction from the priests their dead bodies were insulted and thrown into the common sewer. At Porte-des-Carmes between two and three hundred of the Camisards, —a helpless company of aged men, women, and children— were put to the sword, and the remainder burnt alive in the mill where they were conducting worship, and in the Upper Cevennes 466 villages and hamlets were reduced to ashes. The few Huguenots who at this period survived, and had failed to make their escape from France, were made galley-slaves for life, and Protestants were sent to the galleys and cut by the lash, so late as 1769. La Barre, indeed, was executed at Abbeville for disrespect to the "Virgin Mary," in 1766. For seven hundred years, from first to last, the unhappy Vaudois were persecuted by the papacy. No wickedness that the imagination of men could [illegible]st was not practised in this monstrous crusade,

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which brands the church responsible for it with lasting infamy.

I have said that the spirit of liberty received a powerful impulse from the Reformation, and from that period its complete development could be only a question of time. But priestcraft still survived in another form, and the Protestant clergy have been guilty of all the bigotry and intolerance which are inevitably attached to a system upheld by law, and professing to hold final truth. One would have thought that the reformed churches would at least have learnt one great lesson from the terrible history attached to the church of Rome, and that toleration for the religious opinions of others would have been one of their firmest foundation-stones. Such, however, was not the case. Laws in the statute-books of every country existed against heretics from the popular faith, sometimes to burn them, sometimes to exile them, sometimes to take away their civil, or their political, rights. The old war against the growing intellectual freedom of man had become less barbarous, but it still went on.

In 1611 Legat and Wightman were publicly burnt by two English Protestant bishops, and the ministers of the Scotch Kirk were as arrogant as the popes themselves. Through the medium of the elders, the ministers pronounced excommunication and eternal perdition on all refractory members of their flocks, and the smallest disrespect to them was declared to be "prompted by Satan." The psychic gifts inherent in the Scotch organisation enabled them at times, like many others, to foretell events, and added to their power over the people, who were literally kept in an Egyptian bondage. The terrors of Calvinism were con-

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nected with the most common natural occurrences; everything was a sign of the wrath of God and the guilt of the ungodly, and on the Sabbath day it was almost a sin to exist. Mirth was carnal; it was a sin for a husband to kiss his wife, for a parent to kiss her child, for an old woman to water her kail. It was a sin for the charitable to assist the starving unorthodox, or, in short, to think or to do anything condemned by the Kirk, and the unruly were imprisoned, fined, beaten, branded, and forced to do penance bare-footed, on all occasions of rebellion to what may be truly termed the Scotch papacy.

In England the Nonconformists to the Protestant Church suffered terribly during a period of at least a hundred years. Some 60,000 are said to have undergone some form of persecution between 1660 and 1668, and no less than 5,000 died in prison. Hampden was anathematised, Bunyan and Fox were imprisoned, and Baxter was persecuted, and the Quakers suffered in England and Scotland alike. The clergy strenuously opposed every enactment made in favour of the Dissenters, and upheld the tyranny of the Stuarts by preaching "passive obedience," and the "divine right of kings." They beheld the cruelties of Jeffreys and Kirke with indifference, and supported the policy of the reigning sovereign whenever the interests of the church seemed to demand it. During the reign of the Stuarts Presbyterians were everywhere imprisoned, branded, mutilated, scourged, and put in the pillory. And churchmen themselves were compelled to attend their parish church on Sundays, by law.

In America, where a band of the persecuted Nonconformists took refuge, the same spirit was ere long manifested.

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Catholics and Quakers were proscribed, and the executions in Massachusetts and New England form a dark page in Puritan history. In Maryland it was death to deny the Trinity; in New England it was death to deny any portion of the Old or New Testament to be "the infallible Word of God." Roger Williams was exiled in 1635 from the latter state for asserting the great principle of intellectual liberty. Cotton Mather, Parris, and others, through whose misguided and cruel fanaticism an old man of eighty was pressed to death, and twenty executions took place, to say nothing of torture and scourgings, were publicly thanked for their zeal by the clergy of Boston and Charlestown.

In 1680 Isaac Orobio was tortured and confined for three years in a dungeon by the Inquisition, at Seville, for infidelity and Judaism.

In Sweden "heretics" were persecuted and exiled.

Throughout Europe the belief in "witchcraft" caused an amount of suffering which it is impossible to conceive. The most ordinary psychological phenomena, insanity, and common diseases, became the objects of the prevailing superstition, and numbers were put to death for no other reason than the excited imagination of themselves or their neighbours. Even those who exercised the benevolent power of "healing" were frightfully tortured before execution, and some were driven mad from the effects of their sufferings. In Geneva, in the sixteenth century, 500 women were executed in three months, and 128 burnt in Geneva and Savoy by a bishop. In Germany between eight and nine thousand were burnt; in France between twelve and thirteen hundred in the provinces, and a large number in Paris; in Switzerland and in Sweden

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many persons were burnt; in Scotland a large number perished, and the Scotch clergy did their utmost to keep up the superstition. In Leith, in 1664, no less than nine women were burnt alive at one time; and in Spain a large number also suffered, and a woman was burnt in that country so late as 1781. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the belief in "witchcraft" was universal, and old and young were alike committed to the flames. When the laws were at last repealed in Great Britain, in 1773, the Scotch Presbyterian divines protested against it. It is almost needless to say that the ignorance of the church was one of the main causes of this epidemic credulity, with its terrible results. The study of mathematics, chemistry, physics, psychology, anatomy, and medicine, were all weighted with the ecclesiastical charge of "sorcery" and "dealings with Satan." Kepler's works were burnt, and his epitome of the Kopernican system prohibited by the Inquisition in 1618; Buffon was condemned; Newton's discoveries were forbidden to be taught in the University of Salamanca so late as 1771. The hostility to the establishment of the Royal Society in 1662 was headed by an overwhelming body of the clergy, to whom the study of physical science, and the severe and accurate mental training and intellectual expansion it demands, were as alien then as they are now. The knowledge of God's handiwork in the heavens and the earth, and in man, was accounted by the churches which professed to worship Him as a deadly sin. Everywhere human liberty and human progress were sacrificed to the theology of men.

I pass onward to a later period.

The antecedents of the French revolution were oppression and imprisonment, much of which had been

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upheld by ecclesiastical influence, and Louis XIV. may be said to have sown the seed of the Reign of Terror. Descartes was compelled to live in exile, and it had been proposed to burn him for "heretical philosophy," and the Bastille, or some other instrument of church and State, inflicted grievous injury on almost every thinker in France. The Jesuits presided over the bastilles and galleys, and in them or in the state prisons anyone could be immured without trial or sentence, on the authority of a *lettre de cachet.* To the last the clergy supported despotism, and when in 1761 the persecutions for heresy were relaxed, they urgently remonstrated against it. At the time of the revolution, which witnessed horrors similar to those inflicted upon the Huguenots, and in the same places, a century before, their property was estimated at eighty millions, and one-fifth of the land was possessed by the church, which had grown rich by Protestant spoils.

In Spain, the Inquisition was only abolished in 1820, and that country has never recovered from the paralysing influence of priestly dominion. The Spanish bull ring attests the degree of her civilisation Persons are still living who remember the destruction of the convent of Poblet, in which a recently-used torture-chamber was found and a dungeon filled with human bones. In Spanish America millions of the aboriginals were destroyed by the cruelty of the Spaniards, and their land became, in great part, the property of the Roman Church. In 1565 Melendez of Spain massacred the French Protestants in Florida, and 200 were killed, including children and the sick. On the ground mass was afterwards celebrated, and the site of this deed of blood selected for a church. Through treachery

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Melendez afterwards killed several hundreds more who had been confiding enough to trust to his word of honour. And in later times, at the catastrophe which occurred in the cathedral of Santiago, on the "Feast of the Virgin," in 1863, the priests kept the large iron gates across the chancel firmly closed in the face of the shrieking people, in order to save the church properties and "sacred relics." It was the old spirit of the Inquisition in another form, reckless of human lives and happiness alike, when priestcraft and its follies were at stake.

In England, during the incapable reign of George III., the clergy to whom he deferred, aided him in the unjust war upon the colonies which met with its righteous retribution, and when English freedom and the liberty of the press were at stake, church and state as usual joined forces against the people. Priestley was persecuted in Birmingham ; the bishops opposed Catholic emancipation, and the Dissenters suffered anew. Every fresh step in science was met by strenuous opposition. The discovery of vaccination was denounced from the pulpit, and texts of Scripture hurled against the offending Jenner. Combe was accused of "infidelity." The heaven-sent blessing of chloroform applied by Sir James Simpson in our own century, to the amelioration of sufferings which have indeed been a curse to womanhood in civilised countries, was vehemently resisted as "contrary to Holy Writ." The abolition of church-rates, and the establishment of state education free from theological errors and sectarian bias, were measures which met with the same opposition and the same outcries. At the solemn hour when the last rites were being performed over the remains of the great Von Humboldt, at

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Berlin, in 1859, the clergy almost entirely absented themselves, and the great facts taught by the study of geology excited an hostility from the church and the orthodox, which found vent in the expressions of opinion that the science was "a dark art," and an "awful evasion of the testimony of revelation." Religious terrorism has cast its dark shadow over truths which only served to reveal the power of the Creator and the grandeur of the methods by which His worlds have been evolved. Railroads, telegraphs, discoveries, accidents, all have formed fertile themes for clerical warnings and anathemas.

The wonderful researches of Darwin, Boucher de Perthes, Huxley, Lubbock, and Lyell, are stigmatised by the orthodox as "dangerous," or "irreligious"; and while attempts are made on the one hand to represent the atomic theory as only a revival of ancient philosophy, just as attempts were made in the sixteenth century to show that the Kopernican theory was merely a revival of the Pythagorean doctrine, which had been "thoroughly exploded," strenuous endeavours are made on the other to overthrow every aspect of evolution except Darwin's *facts*.

In America, the advocates of the abolition of slavery ran the gauntlet of both lay and clerical persecution. "I can bear testimony," says John G. Whittier, "to George Thompson's courage, fidelity, and self-sacrifice, in that terrible year when press and pulpit, caucus and legislature, were everywhere hounding on the people against us." In Boston, George Thompson and Lloyd Garrison were denounced by the press and the clergy, and it was there that Garrison was dragged through the streets by the



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ignorant mob inflamed against him, with a halter round his neck. The church taught that slavery was a divine ordinance because it existed among the ancient Jews, and declared the abolitionists to be "profane" persons, who "fought against God." The "curse on Ham," like the "curse on Eve," must be maintained at all costs. After a thirty years' struggle, the stain of negro slavery was blotted out in a war which deluged America with blood.

In Italy, forty years ago, the Scriptures were read in secret; and so late as some fifteen years since persons have bought some of the New Testaments on sale in Rome at last, in order to tear them up and scatter them on the ground. Bonfires have been made of them even in Ireland. The Index Expurgatorius of 1599 still exists. So also does the theology of Trent. In the teeth of the spirit of religious freedom which is now making itself felt throughout Europe, and which was aided in the results of Sadowa and Sedan, the Æcumenical Council declared, in the summer of 1870, in favour of the pitiable doctrine of papal infallibility, the only result of which is to promote the schism which precedes disintegration, and papal denunciations were once more thundered against the "Satan and his emissaries," who dared to fight for freedom and to ignore the pope.

The close of the year, however, beheld a swift reply to this last effort of human arrogance to arrest the divine and unchangeable laws of God. The Franco-Prussian war had in the same summer withdrawn the French troops from the papal territory, and late in the autumn Victor Emmanuel, owner of a name of happy augury, entered Rome, once

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more the capital of United Italy, and the temporal power of the pope was swept away. The prisons of Naples were a result of the influence of the Vatican, and the cry for liberty and justice was no less a protest against the power of the priest.

In looking back upon the past, it must be remembered that it avails nothing to point to a St. Vincent de Paul, a Fénélon, or a St. Teresa. Among the Pharisees also were a Hillel and a Simeon. There are pure souls in all times attached to systems which they are not strong enough to reform. Visions, voices, and spiritual manifestations—"many wonderful works," are not confined to the records of the Roman Church. The Jews of Pilate's time had the same belief and experiences with the same inoperative, because subordinated, result. The heralds of a great religious reform are not drawn within the spheres of human authority and dictation, but gather round and inspire free human souls, the "heretics" of their age, and send them forth among the people.

Nor, indeed, can the history of ignorance and bigotry be permitted to close here. But a few years ago Rowland Williams was prosecuted for heresy in the ecclesiastical courts; Colenso was inveighed against by innumerable doctors of divinity; *Essays and Reviews* raised a storm in the clerical world; and Canon Farrar, like Maurice before him, has been convicted of "mischievous error," and solemnly expostulated with for his brave attempt to lighten the prevailing darkness of theology with *Eternal Hope.* Meanwhile, ritualism among the clergy advances apace. Youths of weak mental fibre, educated at Oxford, and influenced by subtle dialecticians, who reason like lawyers,



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but never like men, enter the church, retire to a clergy-house, preach *compulsory* confession to a priest, *i.e.*, as a "sacrament," and indite letters on note-paper ornamented with red crosses, and dated "the feast of the blessed St. Chad." Twelve thousand pounds have recently been wasted in prosecuting a clergyman of the Church of England during a period of twelve years, for lighting candles when not wanted, elevating a paten, wearing a chasuble, biretta, and other garments of a ritualistic persuasion, making the sign of the cross, mixing water with sacramental wine, kissing the prayer-book, and causing a bell to be rung during the consecration of the "elements."* And an English clergyman, who is in favour of reunion with the Roman Church, has not long since openly defended the Marian persecutions,

*I have before me now an "Anglican" imitation of the Roman Catholic *Garden of the Soul*, in which I find among the "Penitential devotions," prayers for confession. In the Index I find *Three Theological Virtues, Four Cardinal Virtues, Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, Seven Corporal Works of Mercy. . . . Three Notable Duties, The Golden Litany, The Five Joyful Mysteries*, &c., all marshalled out with mathematical precision. In a pamphlet there are directions after receiving the sacrament to ejaculate "Body of Christ save me, Blood of Christ refresh me, Water from the side of Christ wash me, In thy wounds hide me," &c. With the theology of the *War Cry* fresh in one's recollection, and the open revival of these monkish phrases and practices, the religion of Christ and his mission to the world seem, if it were possible, to be well-nigh forgotten! Mental slavery and theological errors have ever taken the form of an "angel of light," but every step in human progress has pointed out their true character, let the form be celibacy, persecution, opposition to knowledge and freedom, undeviating dogmas, or any other sin against the soul. Meanwhile let it be remembered that superstition, atheism, and vice are sisters who walk hand-in-hand, and who are all acquiring a terrible power at the time, especially the last in the large cities which have now every European country.

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and considers "heresy" on a par with murder and "rebellion." He has a brother after his own heart in France. M. Veuillot avowed his Ultramontane policy in the *Univers* thus: "For my part I frankly avow my regret not only that John Huss was not burnt sooner, but that Luther was not burnt too. And I regret that there has not been some prince sufficiently *pious* and politic to have made a crusade against Protestants." Individuals of this last stamp may be priests by nature, but they are neither men nor Christians. They are not worthy to wipe the dust from off the feet of one of the old martyrs, who many a time might have escaped death and suffering by a word.

It is difficult to conceive how any sane persons, not brought up in their midst, can presume to institute such practices and such beliefs in the name of religion in our time, but what is it at the root of these mental departures? An irrational theology, which has been opposing the work of Christ for nearly two thousand years, which drives the weak to ecclesiasticism, and the strong to atheism and materialism, and a church which keeps up the system which the foregoing pages have plainly proved to be a deadly one to all that is best and noblest in human nature, by the arm of the law. The State Church will never cease to want a Lord Penzance, or to produce a Bradlaugh, and however estimable and self-denying individual members of the clergy may be, it is impossible to be much in contact with them without recognising that they are pledged to ideas which are fatal to human liberty and progress. The abolition of slavery, the temperance and the peace movements, were all begun by men outside the Church, and whenever toleration or

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great social reforms have been established they have, with the rarest exceptions, been forced upon the clergy by the common sense of the people. Churchmen are the persons who monopolise the Universities, uphold sectarian methods of instruction, oppose religious equality and free education, who zealously maintain the Athanasian Creed, who fear truth lest it should "unsettle" those not yet driven to atheism, and who would fight to the death to maintain the old marriage-service of Bishop Sarum, which holds the soul of woman in the curse of a man-made subjection. Whatever intellect they possess is almost always intellect without manhood, an intellect which dares not face large problems, which defers to the conclusions of an earlier age, and which expends its whole force in defence of narrow and dogmatic assertions. And recently this tendency has assumed a darker hue in the Jesuitical attempts to distort historical facts of the plainest kind in order to whitewash the Church of Rome. Truly, it may once more be said: "Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them."

Yet the social reforms and scientific discoveries opposed by the churches have done more for the alleviation of suffering, and the advancement of civilisation and happiness, than all the almsgiving and the external and superficial methods of assistance which mere charity, without knowledge, could possibly devise. With a mighty voice they speak and condemn the anthropomorphic worship of man.

The recent discussion on the Burials Bill should open the eyes of all not blinded by the mist of superstition still among us, as to the utter incapacity of the average clerical

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mind to teach practical religion. It is a deplorable fact that clergymen came forward to enter their "solemn protest" against the passing of the bill as "dishonour done to Almighty God." Man has indeed made God in his own image! How necessary that bill was may be shewn from the fact that more than one clergyman has declined to read the burial service over a child that had received "heretical baptism" from a Dissenting or "unlawful" minister. The gnat is always strained at, the camel swallowed; the revision of the articles would create a clerical uproar, while war and prostitution go on without a protest.

The English church, however, in fact, is one only in name and two of the three distinct parties into which she is now severed, and which are held together by threads, are pledged as irrevocably to the past as the Ultramontane party among the Catholics, and must hasten her approaching dissolution.

The follies of the present, like the crimes of the past, are a just result of that system of ecclesiasticism which has been a curse to the world, and of which both Roman and Protestant churches stand guilty at this hour. The record of those crimes is far from being set forth in these pages, but the near future will bring them all into a searching light. They are no light ones. They were committed with every circumstance of deliberate and cold-blooded cruelty; they were committed in the face of the holy religion Christ gave to the world; they were committed by those who professed to be the guardians of that religion; and they sacrificed the noblest among men. But for their firmness, civilisation would have been arrested, and the hypocrisy

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and fear engendered in those who lacked the courage to avow their opinions have inflicted a deep injury on our race.

Such is the history of the "divinely-inspired" and "miraculously-sustained churches," and the Christianity of men.

When one thinks of the innocent men and women, some of them reformers and workers for humanity of the most heroic type,—fastened to stakes in every country in Europe, and burnt alive, not seldom, by a slow fire, and sometimes after torture,—who yielded up their souls in a crisis of bodily and often mental agony which no words can ever describe, the heart sinks at the long and awful story of human suffering! That innocent blood, though it has been shed in the past, has been crying to heaven from those days to these, and the hour of her "whose cup is full" is at hand. Such tortures as she inflicted were unknown, except in rare instances, even in the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome. She it is who has "persecuted the saints of God," and sinned against light. Throughout the everlasting ages she will stand condemned, as sin must ever be. As in the Jewish church of old, which fell into like errors and was guilty of "the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias which perished between the altar and the temple," so in this day "in *her* has been found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." And as within forty years after the crucifixion of Christ one stone was not left upon another in the temple at Jerusalem, so in forty years from the coming year there shall not be left, in a spiritual sense, one stone upon another within the churches of to-day.

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Well has a modern writer declared, "If it be true Christianity to dive with a passionate charity into the darkest recesses of misery and vice, to irrigate every quarter of the earth with the fertilising stream of an almost boundless benevolence, and to include all the sections of humanity in the circle of an intense and efficacious sympathy; if it be true Christianity to destroy or weaken the barriers which have separated class from class and nation from nation, to free war from its harshest elements, and to make a consciousness of essential equality and of a genuine fraternity dominate over all accidental differences; if it be above all true Christianity to cultivate a love of truth for its own sake, a spirit of candour and of tolerance towards those with whom we differ, then never since the days of the apostles has it been so vigorous as at present, and the *decline of dogmatic systems and of clerical influence*, has been a measure, if not a cause, of its advance."

Most true. I ask, which is the truest Christian, Lloyd Garrison, the spiritualist, flying down the streets of Boston from a mob which the church had helped to incite, because he was the fearless advocate of righteousness and justice, or the Ritualist who cuts a hole in a woman's apron because some "sacramental wine" has been upset upon it, licks up fallen crumbs of bread, and prates of "heresy" over a child's coffin? This so-called orthodoxy, this travesty of religion, kept up at the expense of millions of human lives in the past and millions of money in the present, which moulds the minds of the young when they are helpless, and builds more on a text or a passage from the Fathers than on the laws of the universe which it ignores, which has de-

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graded even the very central truth of immortality by hideous superstitions and horrors—has done more to dishonour the work of Christ than atheism itself. Yet that work still lives and grows as the great inspiring power and the very breath of reform in every age. God's greatest teachers have ever been either persecuted or poor; they have never been divines or theologians; they have been without titles, or mitres, or sceptres; they have learned to love truth for its own sake, to wear the "crown of thorns," and to disregard popularity and the opinions of men. And the only church of Christ, preserving the only true "succession," has been the church of the martyrs for truth and liberty and reform.

Intellect alone has never been a light to man as a great moral motive-power, else Greece or Rome of old would have inspired the world, and not Judæa. It has been given through chosen instruments in advance of their age, who strenuously upheld the truths breathed into them from a higher sphere with heroic courage, and were as strenuously opposed. Not in the Parthenon, not in the Forum, have echoed the voices which have moved mankind, but by the hill-sides of Bethany, over the lonely plains of India, in the deserts of Arabia—from the prison-walls, the criminal's dock, above the curses of the mob. Intellect is powerless without spiritual strength and inspiration, the strongest, the most unconquerable, and divinest force in man. And those great appeals to the human soul require renewal and illumination from age to age, or they fall to the level of the earthly thoughts of men. Especially is this true of the matchless light of Christianity.

It was one of the dark sayings of Christ, which

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probably none around him understood, that "strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." *What* life? The immortal life of the kingdom of heaven, which he also taught us was *within* us, and which recoils from the gross life of the world. Some have indeed entered it through the earthly martyrdom which he foretold would be the fate of his disciples, and which has been the fate of some of his truest followers in every age, outcasts of the churches though they were, and the terrors of human cruelty have only served to make the faithful spirit strong. "*These* are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" in other words, who shared the martyr-fate of Christ, and testified to truth at the price of their lives; who, like him, came down to perform some heroic mission for which suffering and oppressed humanity cried out, and which could only be accomplished in the mortal form. Men are redeemed and spirits ennobled by these Christ-inspirations, and his spirit has rested upon every strong and true worker in behalf of righteousness and justice on this globe. Wherever one has sacrificed himself for human welfare, *there has stood Christ;* in the market-place, with its awful pile of wood; in the mediæval dungeon; in the torture-chambers of the priests; in the prisons of Rome and Naples; by the emancipator of the slave and of woman; by the spiritual teacher and the messenger of truth; and as the cry of "heretic," "sorcerer," "infidel," "impostor," has been raised, *he*, who knew what it was to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful —even unto death," has drawn near to the soul in anguish and welcomed his servant home! The "sign of the Son

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of Man" has been THE CROSS. Who dare to deny that a noble life exalts and beautifies the spirit of man?—that volume in which every action and every prevailing thought is recorded, and which becomes in each his rewarding or his accusing angel? None but those who teach the deadly error that a life of sin may be condoned by faith in the Jewish idea of a sacrifice to appease a Creator's wrath, and who understand nothing of the nature of the spirit either here or hereafter. And these have persecuted, and persecute still, those led of the spirit; because as Christ said: "These things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor me."

And now—I appeal to England—are we to have the Christ of Bradlaugh, materialised, and placed on a level with Confucius, Zoroaster, and Mahomed, or the immortal Christ of the gospels and of spiritual truth? I see approaching on this land an hour of judgment which will shape its destiny. Christ, the grandest soul that ever shone forth in a divine liberty and reflected God, the most strong and free and sublime being who ever trod the weary and the sin-stained plains of earth on a majestic errand, the great Spiritual Man whose divinity is so misunderstood, and whose mission has been so outraged by human errors—he who came down to teach men truth and to demonstrate their immortality—condemns the churches of the past and of the present, to-day. In his true glory he again appears. The principles of his "judgments" on the second manifestation of his presence—those which should make the "first last and the last first," he long ago foretold. Once more he turns from the Scribes and Pharisees to the people, once more he stands forth to say, "O righteous Father, the

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world hath not known Thee, but *I* have known Thee," and "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, *ye did it not to me*," and in that divine balance both priests and creeds are "*weighed and found wanting.*" The long era of martyrdom, of the "souls under the altar," is at its close, and the victory of truth and liberty and love—the Christ-reign of righteousness, is even now nigh unto our doors.

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"The slumbering Iguanadon
Lay reeking in mephitic damp—
The Mylodon and Mastodon
Startled the forests with their tramp.
Gigantic ferns, like feathery palms,
Nodded in silence to the trees,
Whose royal crests and stalwart arms
Tossed like the waves of stormy seas.

Thus on, still on, the current rolled—
The light of countless mornings shone;
And radiant sunsets robed in gold,
Swept down the gulf of years unknown.
At length, with beasts, and birds, and flowers,
Creation seemed a perfect whole;
Then God and Nature joined their powers,
And man became a living soul.

O Mother Nature! Father God!
How wondrous is the work we trace!
Man fashioned from the senseless clod,
Yet filled with life's divinest grace.
Nor is that form of earthly mould
The limit of his life to be;
Forth from the mortal will unfold
The germ of immortality!"

From *The Living Word.* (*Poems of Progress*).

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION.

WHAT is evolution? To the modern man of science it yields up the key of all the varied physical phenomena of nature. It opens, notwithstanding the many pages torn from that book of stone which lies underneath our feet, but which is still eloquent with the strong purpose of its being,—the door to avenues of thought and of discovery which were at one time sealed to man. It points with unerring finger to the sublime law, and the great object of the planet on which we live. That law is progress; that object the creation of man; and although the absolute proof of half-developed races of beings which have lived and died, and which once represented the highest form of life on our globe, is still required, the facts on which the evolutionist bases his belief gather so closely around it, that we infer their existence as we infer that of some ancient ocean when we find far inland the fragmentary remains of shells.

The enormous changes through which our globe has passed, the continents formed and swept away, its periods of intense heat and ice-like cold, its fossil remains of every kind, and its primary rocks, which have no tale to tell save that there was a time when life existed not,—all point to the vast period which must have elapsed since it came into being from the fire-mist in space. Had that long period no purpose? Was one of those millions of years wasted, and without its end?



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No. Each hour witnessed change, and change in the direction of growth towards something higher, no matter what the cataclysm, the struggle of its birth. Scarred with fire and rent with earthquake, barren of life, even the life of some small lichen-stain upon its rocks, one who could have looked upon it then might have thought it a forsaken orb which never could become what we call a world. But each day saw its matter become more refined, each year saw its rocks slowly pulverised into fertile earth, its plains prepared, its steaming mists upraised in clouds and dispersed in showers, its trickling streams gathering into rivers, and its oceans retreating upon their sandy shores. The life for which those countless days and years had been a preparation at last stole slowly forth: the moss appeared; the coarse blade of grass; the lowest forms of vegetation. The germs of life arose, fostered by sun, and wind, and rain, and ever-changing conditions, from their basis of protoplasm, and the different environments of these primodial life-germs produced the variations in their organisation which bade some remain corals and mollusks, and some develop into higher forms. Age after age, upwards and onwards, grew and arose the ascending scale; there came the coal-fern of the swamps, the mighty palm, the graceful encrinite, the weird saurians, the huge pachyderms, and finally the more nobly organised elk and mammoth of a recent age. The flower, the singing bird, the grass-grown field, the clear sky, all rejoiced in the promise of the coming time. The cave-dwellers, earliest of our race, appeared at last, fished in the laughing waters of the river, hunted their game, invented their rude instruments of warfare and of industry in the age of Stone. What though they were woolly-haired, and thick-lipped, and ill-formed,—

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what though their customs were childish and savage,—their soul-life in subjection to their physical nature, and the long ancestry of countless forms of organised life? The era of the human race had dawned upon the earth, and with it the fulfilment of which those forms were silent prophecies. The first movements of monad and ascidian all had their part to play in producing mind. Life; sensation; intelligence; each had manifested itself through the organism and the kingdom fitted to give it birth. In man all these were represented, concentrated, developed, in order that he, "the heir of all the ages," should express something higher,—*soul*. The immense diversity of the vegetable kingdom, and of insect life; the lesser, but still great, diversity of the animal kingdom, all yielded in power and nobility to the being who exhibited *unity* of type and structure, who stood erect upon the earth, possessed of no weapon of defence, who had become subject to a new law, and whose strength lay in his brain.

Such is evolution; the science of universal progress, which is now recognised by some minds, and which will ere long be recognised by all. And it is here that spiritualism uplifts the study of material science into a sublime plane. The materialist looks only on the past; he notes the testimony of the igneous rocks, the records of countless forms of life in higher and higher grades, which have perished for ever; he ponders on the drift-beds of the Somme, the caves of Aurignac and Liége, the traces of semi-human life to be found almost everywhere upon our globe; the ocean-steamer of to-day enables him to come face to face with the fast-dying phenomenon of savage life which recoils from human civilisation; he beholds the rude effort, as it were, of the



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being before him to become man; the enormous lips and nose, the retreating forehead, the undeveloped brain, the oftentimes uncouth form, the cruel customs and ignorant and barbarous habits; and from their significant contemplation he turns to the story written in his own body and the bodies of all other men. He learns facts from physiology which are eloquent with the same history, the same great law—*progress*; he recognises what *he* was once—as child and infant, and that before he was born he was something which bore resemblance to the different stages of life which have been manifested in external nature. And turning from this towards the great scriptures of the sky, his telescope reveals to him the nebulous cloud, the circling matter forming and taking shape, the growing sun, the perfect system, the planet like our own. The history of the smallest satellite is written even in its movement, its orbit, and its plane. And because he cannot read that sublime story aright, because he looks only on the past, and tries to read it in the limited light of his scientific perception, he becomes a materialist, and falls into the strange error of maintaining that life is merely a phenomenon of matter, a species of energy, which he also confesses he does not understand.

Oh! blind leaders of the blind! Is there *one* fact in nature which is not an eternal mystery to you, if you cannot read that long history of the past aright? Go out, and stand upon the sea-shore, and look down upon one of its myriads of cast-off shells, which some careless wave washes to your very foot. You know its long Latin name,—you can tell its chemistry,—but do you know what it is, what office it has filled in the mystery of being? Is it not something more?—

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"Frail, but a work divine,
Made so fairily well,
With delicate spire and whorl,
A miracle of design!

The tiny cell is forlorn,
Void of the *little living will*
That made it stir on the shore.
Did he stand at the diamond door
Of his house in a rainbow-frill?
Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,
A golden foot or a fairy horn
Through his dim water-world?

Slight, to be crushed with a tap
Of my finger-nail on the sand,
Small, but a work divine,
Frail, but of force to withstand,
Year upon year, the shock
Of cataract seas that snap
The three-decker's oaken spine
Athwart the ledges of rock,
Here on the Breton strand!"

Yes,—strong for its work, and its work was to shelter the "*little living will*"—the spiritual germ! There is the secret of its story,—of its "miracle of design." In this sense the whole world is a miracle, and though we call it Nature, it is the miracle of God.

The spiritualist *knows* this; and he looks upon the past and reads its history in letters of light. All life to him is a manifestation of the Central Source whence it emanated as spirit-essence, and returns as conscious soul. What the materialist calls force, something he knows not what, the

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spiritualist realises to be *spirit*, something creative, indestructible, progressive, divine. Something, which it has been beautifully said "sleeps in the stone, dreams in the animal, and awakes in man." And the modern discoveries of the conservation and correlation of force, almost demonstrate this truth. Development of spirit is the end of every form of being, and finally the birth of conscious mind, and attainment of individual immortality. The thoughtful spiritualist accepts all that science can and will teach of that physical evolution not only maintained by the school of Darwin, but taught by inspiration to the most unlettered minds; and he penetrates its great design, and teaches in return, *spiritual evolution*, which is its master-key. This has been called *re-incarnation*, and blindly fought against by those who dare not meddle with the discoveries of science, but dream that they can bend the spirit-world to their will. It is really the great lesson of evolution, or development of spirit, and among the teachers of this lesson, so rebelliously learned, is William Fletcher.

It is in harmony not only with the law of progress which has refined and spiritualised our planet, and which has prepared both its surface and its atmosphere for sustaining higher forms of life than could possibly have existed in the past,—but with those economical laws which utilise even death and decay through re-combination and reconstruction. As the physical life of the body which is in its present condition subject to the law of death, is disintegrated, but not destroyed; as it gives up its gross elements to be wrought by the wonderful alchemy of nature into herbs, and flowers, and spears of grass, so also is the period of each life lived by the spirit in the body

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utilised, and its very passions, and miseries, and corruptions, are likewise employed to bring forth elements of good. Life out of death everywhere, and everywhere, in religion, science, and the story of the human race, *higher* life, is the law of all things. The very civilisations of the past with their buried cities, and treasures, and forgotten races of men, live, and more than live, over again, in the grander civilisations of the present. There has been no real retrogression.

If nature seems to challenge our little view of perfection, it will be with the subtle art of an accomplished craftsman; with a knowledge that is science, and a science that is poetry, could we interpret all she shows. Nature can afford to smile where man can only weep; her principles are immutable and immeasurably vast; her vision is the eye of God which "discerneth all things"; she produces her gazelle and her ape, her fragile nautilus, and her crab, her Bushman and her Shakespeare; and instructs man thus that the contrasts of diversity must come before the harmony of a divine unity; and the beauty of knowledge must precede the knowledge of beauty, and that thus alone can be upreared a world.

In a trance-address, our seer replied to the great question, *Is Re-incarnation a Fact*, in a way which is calculated to make that fact take its place among accepted truths. "Every single form of animal life," he said, "has held some purpose; they have each one, however strange and uncouth, been adapted to the exact ends they were designed to fulfil; they have all acted as so many machines which prepared and refined the elements of our planet."

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When the human spirit is born into the spirit-world, it either remains there or returns to the earth-sphere, in accordance with its own state of development. The possibilities of human life must be exhausted before the immortal life of the spiritual world is attained; and it is as impossible for a man whose life is composed of material pleasures and pursuits to enter and remain in the eternal kingdom, as it is for "a rope to go through the eye of a needle." He belongs to earth; he enters the spirit-world to find himself homeless; there is nothing to attract him *there*. His hopes and joys are of this world, and by the law of attraction he returns to learn the higher lessons which human life can teach him, and which he must learn before his spirit acquires the strong and perfect individuality and power which for ever repel it from the earth-sphere and draw it upwards to the life of a more refined and higher condition. The condition of his spirit is the "book" which becomes open; the day of his "death" is the only day of judgment. "*Re-incarnation is not, however, compulsory;* it becomes essential to the spirit, and finally its desire." Is it not also a more rational doctrine than that which exhibits thousands of earth-bound spirits gathering around the vicious and the haunts of vice, and unable to rise from the conditions their own thoughts and deeds have created? Is it not better to re-live the misspent life, to learn to subdue the animalism which renders this process necessary, than to dwell perhaps for ages in such a hell as this? Most surely! And the divine law which forces the spirit back to the human life it does not understand, which makes that life the speediest and best means of unfolding its powers, removing its ignorance,

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quickening its soul-life, is one for which men will one day thank God.

The life of the past also sometimes lends a mighty power to the life of the present, and establishes a strange identity were it possible that the two could be compared. "Do you think," said William Fletcher in a prophetic address on *Joan of Arc* as a worker for freedom in the past, and a higher form of liberty in the future—"*that a handful of ashes was all that was left of Jeanne d'Arc?*' No. The age demands; the hour comes; the spirit, just as earnest as before and filled with a greater light, responds; the work is done. The physical struggles of one life may be paralleled by the moral events of another; in one age it may be the righteous freedom of a nation; in another the eternal freedom of the race. Not in vain are the "strong crying and tears," the hours of darkness and peril borne for the sake of souls less advanced in the pathway of life; the past rises up and gives unconscious strength in the present, and the present wins its way at last towards the light. The sense of the victory of truth and a just cause inspires every soul which has experienced one life strongly and truly lived, and it is the capacity to endure to the end resulting from that unconscious memory which enables it to accept a yet higher mission.

I now deal with a popular objection. William Fletcher delivered a second lecture at Steinway Hall on the subject of *Individual Immortality*, in which it was pointed out that a certain number of spirits worked out their development by being attached to human beings and their labours in earth-life; and that through them came inspiration, and education which were valuable to mortal and to spirit, a

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point which was ably alluded to by Alfred Russel Wallace, in some reflections upon the close companionship of Winona and her medium in a brief article in the *Spiritualist* of January 28th, 1878. But the objection to absolute re-incarnation is that it destroys human ties of kindred and affection; and the only way in which these natural feelings can be answered is by pointing out in what individuality really consists. From the lecture alluded to I quote the following passage:—

"But what is identity? How do you know your mortal friends? There are many distinguishing signs by which you recognise them; you know them by the voice, by the movement, by the complexion, the features, the height, the footfall, the handwriting, and by a thousand other marks. Is it not possible, however, that these marks of identity should be changed? A mother leaves her child, and does not see him again for a quarter of a century. She returns and says, 'I look for my little child;' but she does not find *him*. Why? The child has become something greater; he has grown into a man. But has that child lost his identity? No. Nothing is changed; there has been only growth, development; the possibilities of his nature have been drawn out, its promises have been fulfilled. This is all. And if men of science are right, and the body of to-day no longer contains an atom of the material of the body of seven years ago, every hour of change, to say nothing of a hundred events and accidents which are ever taking place, all serve to obliterate the external marks of identity. You look for the *physical* identity, and this is destructible, because the body is destructible. But there is something beyond this;

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there is not only the identity of the body ; there is also the identity of the spirit, and that can never die."

In the spirit-world, it is the *only* identity. The case of the child is paralleled by that of the savage. He is a child of earth, and to earth he will be held till he knows somewhat of its higher life, somewhat of its power to teach him things of whic in his rude hut, and amid his primitive surroundings, he has never even dreamed. Does anyone wish *his* identity to be preserved,—are the low-type features suited to express the soul-life of an angelic spirit? His physical identity, unless savage existence is to be maintained in the higher spheres, must be lost, and shall we dictate how his spirit is to be best developed? It is the same with the more civilised barbarian,—the one who wears a frock-coat, and promenades in Regent Street, and wastes hours at his club, or at pigeon-matches. What has been the law of *his* life? Self, and its motto, "Eat, drink, and be merry." He belongs to the class quaintly but graphically described in the lines :—

> "There are a number of us creep
> Into this world to eat and sleep ;
> And know no reason why we're born,
> But only to consume the corn,
> Devour the cattle, fowl, and fish,
> And leave behind an empty dish."

He has never known the want of a higher life ; poverty, and misery, and ignorance have never made any appeal to him ; he enjoys certain luxuries and privileges, the benefit of civilisation, because the labours of other men have made these possible for him, and like a leaf he is carried along on a tide which he has never influenced. Are his affections so

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beautiful that they deserve immortality? Would not rather an immortality of such a life as his, as well as that of the poor Hottentot he would despise, be the greatest curse which could be inflicted upon each? Not thus is heaven peopled with the angels of God!

The argument in behalf of affection is a plea for that which can hardly be said to exist. The tie of earthly marriage, that falsehood in the sight of heaven, is one which entrance into the spirit-world rarely fails to dissolve. The marriage of the spirit is hardly ever made, pure and eternal love is almost unknown upon this earth. Can that serpent of animalism, the inharmonious union, alike made in Europe and the East, disguised by so-called religious rites and upheld by legal forms, uplift its head in the bright world beyond? No. For it is this which creates and perpetuates the cruelty, the vice, disease and death of our planet, which fills the world with beings so spiritually deformed that they live in ignorance and die in darkness, and which, in truth, produces the necessity for this law of re-incarnation. When Eden is restored to man, and there is an Eden for every world in God's universe, these things shall no longer be. Only that which is pure, that which is noble, that which is full of the strong individuality which makes men saviours to their race, and fills them with the love, not of popular beliefs, but of right actions, can inherit eternal life, and who would not wish the identity of the spirit—and each spirit has a spark of the divine, its own peculiar inheritance—to grow and become more beautiful in things like these? As each spirit-essence of long ages ago accreted to itself more perfect organs, and evinced a higher manifestation of life, so does the advancing spirit

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tenant a fairer mortal form, till at last it becomes radiant with the soul-life, and bursts for ever the bonds which attached it to earth, and re-enters, a spirit-immortal, into its eternal home. In describing, so far as was possible, one of these higher spiritual beings in the spirit-world, Winona said, "Wherever he passes he leaves the *light of his presence.*" "No human mind," it has been said through a spirit communication, "fertile in imagination as it may be, can picture in its wildest fancy the overpowering and transcendant beauty of the progressed and elevated human soul."

Let reason declare whether spiritual evolution is not the truth which, like that of physical evolution, solves every problem which the mind of man can consider. No day passes without witnessing the birth of thousands of human beings. If each possesses a freshly-created spirit, untold millions born of this planet alone, must live in all stages of development, most in the very lowest, in the unseen world, for which ages would be required to fit them even for the first stage of true spirit-existence. "Nature," says Figuier, "is a closed book to the majority of mankind, who live in the most curious and various phenomena, but who occupy themselves in eating and drinking, and trying to harm their fellows. The population of our globe numbers 1,300,000,000, and of all this multitude hardly 10,000 can be said to have studied the sciences and really cultivated their minds. All the rest of mankind are abandoned to an intellectual passiveness which almost reduces them to the level of animals." And Greg mournfully adds, "There are souls to be reckoned by the million, low, grovelling, undeveloped, desperately bad, and which could scarcely, save by miracle, have been

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other than they are. What becomes of them? Why are they here?" These men can give no reply. The answer is given in the law of which I speak. Nature tells us that God is the Great Economist of the universe, and as He has decreed that the higher the form of life, the fewer shall be its expressions, that the cerebrally-developed shall not increase either in number or variety as the elementary organisms of the river, the air, or the ocean,—can we suppose He is prodigal of that which is the grand object and effort of all the ages,—*spirit?* What matter the varied physical bodies, the incarnations, as long as His law is obeyed, and *it* ascends? The time will come when the seers of our race shall be so numerous that they will smile at the ignorance which assumes the body to be other than a temporary envelope which for a brief hour holds the spirit within, and when men will be recognised and understood, not through their bodies, but through the visible life of that spirit which uses these as its instruments alone. When it does, the human mind will universally recognise the profound importance and the solemn lessons of truths like these.

In the vision of Judge Edmonds, in which he beheld some of the advanced spheres of the spirit-world, an angelic spirit addressed him in these impressive words: "Go back," he said, "to earth, and teach its darkened inhabitants how glorious is the country which they may inhabit, how bright the happiness they may earn for themselves. Beseech them no longer to grovel in the earth, seeking their enjoyment in earthly objects, but to *look up*—and from on high shall come to them the knowledge which shall indeed make them free. Teach them that happiness and heaven do not come to them as a gratuity, but are to be earned by their labour, to be

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merited by their toil. Teach them that God does not work by miracles, but by eternal, immutable laws, which are all-powerful to save, all-mighty to condemn, and which are not found in the glosses of men, but are written by His own Almighty hand, in all of nature that is spread out around them.

"Bid them look out upon the universe of worlds, which from your high place you can behold marshalled in their orbits through the endless realms of space; and reflect upon the countless numbers of living souls inhabiting them and destined for eternity, and ask themselves if it can be that for this earth, which is but a grain of sand on the shore of eternity's ocean—His eternal laws can have been suspended?"

Yes, and we would add, go you, reader, some clear star-lit night, and stand beneath the sky with nothing between you and God. Look out upon that amazing universe which throbs with life, and ask yourself,—what of the theology of so-called civilised man? Is *this* drop in that ocean of worlds the prey of an arch-fiend? Are *its* inhabitants the fore-doomed to an interminable hell? Are *they* bought with the death-agony of earth's holiest messenger, sent to pay with his blood the price demanded by a Moloch?

Oh, falsehoods uttered before the throne of heaven and the Soul of love, by those who know Him not! Look out, I say, and gaze upon those eternal regions of space,—and behold *His* works:

> "Regions of lucid matter taking forms,
> Brushes of fire, hazy gleams,
> Clusters and beds of worlds and bee-like swarms
> Of suns, and starry streams,"

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and return to ask yourself whether the Spirit of God is not there rather than in the vain dogmas of men, and whether He whose life breathes throughout the sublime scheme of that universe, cannot teach His laws and command them to be obeyed upon this tiny world, and by its offspring, man, till the "will of the Father is done," and the human race becomes redeemed at last, not by a miracle, but by the light of true knowledge, from evil, and error, and ignorance, for ever! In that era the attraction to physical life will cease to exist, and matter will become the instrument of man, and no longer form, even for an hour, his prison-house, or the illusion of his senses.

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"It is so cheap to praise what all applaud,
To bend the supple knee and bow the head
Over the graves of the illustrious dead,
Extol the past in popular accord,
And with the lips confess that Christ is Lord!
If we have not the martyr-strength to tread
Their thorny paths, lead onward as they led,
Far in advance of ancient bounds, unawed,—
If, cowards in the present, we recoil
From grappling with the evils of our time,
Content with bygone, vanquished sins to moil,
Content but to commend those men sublime,—
Then we are nought but cumberers of the soil,
And parasites, and panderers to crime!"

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.



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## CHAPTER XIV.

### SPIRITUALISM AND REFORM.

I WISH the closing chapter of this brief and very inadequate history of our modern seer to be devoted to a few thoughts upon spiritualism and reform.

Like all true and earnest spiritualists William Fletcher is a reformer. Like his seership, the love of progress, the indignation at wrong and oppression, and the fixed determination to labour at any cost for religious liberty, are born in him. He has penetrated into the unseen world, and has realised the future life of man, and stands forth as a witness to the truth which the blind cannot see, and the bigot will not believe. In every age there has arisen in behalf of some great change in the history of humanity, "*the hour and the man,*" but the man has not been welcomed, and the hour has passed unrecognised as marked with the crisis of advance, until the great results achieved have pointed out, in after years, his true mission.

"As it hath been, so shall it be," and the modern medium cannot escape the ignorant persecution which, although it ensures victory for truth, has in the past poisoned a Socrates, imprisoned a Galileo, burnt a Huss and a Savonarola, hunted down a Lloyd Garrison in the streets of Boston, and in the darkest day the world ever saw, crucified between two thieves, and on a charge of blasphemy against God,—the heaven-sent Saviour of men.

To testify to the existence of a spirit-world, to teach men what they are and whither they are tending, to see



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spirits, and to hear them speak, to utter their names, to describe their forms and features, to deliver their messages charged with a hundred proofs of identity, to rescue and to save even through their love, and to take away the sadness of death, would, one would think, be counted a blessed work! But it is not so. The man who possesses this God-given power stands between two opposing forces, the scepticism of the great intellects and the religious despotism of the small ones. To neither is the worker in the cause of spiritualism welcome; when not openly denounced, he is avoided, and with him the facts he alone can demonstrate, and the great lessons that they teach. Yet with the spiritualist the hope of the whole world lies. It is he who can prove that Christ was indeed surrounded by "a legion of angels" to a Renan or a Strauss, and he, and he alone, who can give evidence to a Tyndall or a Haeckel of the reality of a world about which they can only wonder, if they ever think of it at all. He is foremost of his time.

Therefore it is that a so-called man of science declares the British Association was "degraded by the discussion on spiritualism" in 1876, and a so-called Christian says in a public meeting, that "their attention must be directed to spiritualism," with the futile purpose of crushing its power.

All this need hardly surprise us. Picture the "leaders" of the *Times* and the *Standard* on the claims of Paul heard for the first time, or the lofty witticisms of the *Saturday Review* upon learning in like manner the fact that the "Nazarene" was unable to manifest spiritual power in an atmosphere of "unbelief"—in other words, one rank with distrust and scepticism—and that he had re-appeared,

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not to the useless Pilate or Caiaphas, but to his disciples. It is true that he was betrayed by a worthless man, but he was condemned amid universal satisfaction by "highly respectable persons," and the first methods followed by the early Christians, as well as their own social status, were hardly likely to impress an intellectual Roman mind. To ridicule them, as well as to persecute, must have been only too easy. Need we ask how incapable men who live for the hour are of gauging the forces at work around them, how completely they misunderstand them, how contracted and short-sighted and material are their processes of criticism? Yet it was far from difficult even then to see which of the two would be victor over human sympathies and intelligence in the end—the cold, self-centred Roman philosopher or the unconquerable and self-sacrificing and expansive spirit of the great old missionary to the Gentile world. And it is no less easy to see now that what is in harmony with the deepest needs of man, upheld by those who have borne for its sake many a storm of criticism and condemnation, must win its way at last to a hearing among the people.

Let us briefly examine the position the new truth occupies as a great reforming agency. In the first place it effects, and will effect still more, a mighty religious reform. It gives new views of God, the Bible, and man. It points to God as the Creator, not of our planet only, but of all worlds, and demonstrates His nature so far as it can be understood by man as the Great Soul of Love and Wisdom, whose Spirit pervades the universe, and Who governs by divine and unchangeable laws; it places the scriptures in the position to which modern Biblical criticism, historical testimony, and the discoveries of science have already

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pointed ; shows what is human, legendary, and temporary, what is divine, true, and eternal, and accepts the spirit while it utterly rejects the letter ; it affirms that the worship of a book is a desecration of the soul which must worship God and Him alone, and it repudiates the time-honoured but now lifeless creeds which have been the result of placing in the position of Deity an inspired and zealous follower of Christ ; it affirms the truth of inspiration, and explains its laws, but declares it to be confined to no age and no race of men, and that the inspired man of to-day is as worthy to teach as the inspired man of the past ; in short, it accepts the revelation and sacred history of a former age as holding great truths and teaching noble lessons but claims the right of man to learn greater truths and nobler lessons whenever they may be given to him, and to follow in the footsteps of the Master in the liberty of the spirit ; it is in truth, rightly understood, a plea for a rational and practical religion, and for human growth. It would seek to raise the lowest, and to draw forth and educate the reasoning powers of every man. It would develop every soul. The Sabbatarianism which was the reactionary error of our Puritan forefathers, and which would close the sources of instruction to the people on the only day on which they can gain access to them, is rejected by the spiritualist. He counsels not a day of imprisonment for the working man, but a cheerful day of rest and culture, as well as devotion and prayer, according to his needs. Equally does he reject and condemn place and power in a legalised priesthood, traffic in livings, in MS. sermons labelled "orthodox," taxes on the people to maintain beliefs "as by law established," and religious tests in politics. Is it reasonable—this new religion, adapted to the

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requirements of man, likely to lift him up from mental slavery into a wise, and noble, and thoughtful recognition of the nature of God and man?

Again, spiritualism reveals, as nothing has ever before revealed, the nature and the destiny of the human race, and heralds the most important social reforms. It shows that every human being, savage or civilised, dusky-hued or fair, ignorant or cultured, possesses a soul capable of boundless development, and that no matter what the stage reached, that this possibility makes him a child of God. It reveals the spirit within all things, and points out in letters of light, that spiritual realm, that etherealised world, which is suited to the condition and aspirations of a higher form of being than the physical planet can sustain. In short, it gives a reasonable and eloquent reply to that *whither*, which is the unanswered question of so many souls at this very hour, and all the curses of the zealot and the pride of the materialist will never prevail against that knowledge of the unseen universe, and that communion now opened between it and the human race which shall dawn unto "the perfect day."

And further, spiritualism has a profound reverence for human rights. Wherever it sets its foot it would destroy slavery, war, the strangling of criminals, the tyranny of despotic government, wrongs of every kind, and show man *how to live*. It would tell him that no amount of repentance can undo the consequences of his wilful transgression of those divine laws, which, understood and obeyed, bring man into harmony with God, but which, disregarded and disobeyed, "grind him to powder." Does the idiot become intelligent because his parents have, at last, grown temperate, but for

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him—poor waif, stranded upon a desolate shore !—too late ? Will the pauper cease to exist as long as the conditions in which pauperism flourishes are to be found in every crowded alley and airless den ? Can the poor wife, who has been slowly killed by brutality and selfishness, be restored to her earthly home, because her husband, after years of drunkenness and dissipation, has at last been caught within the magnetic whirlwind of a revival ?

Spiritualism teaches that repentance must be *lived*, not merely felt, that redemption must date from noble parentage and birth, that childhood must be trained in wisdom, so that each life may become a power for good from its first breath to its last. It ranges over the past history of the world, with all its records of suffering, its struggles, its oppression of the weaker by the stronger races, its rising and falling civilisations, and it beholds one law,—the divine one of progress, the evolution of the higher out of the lower, the evil out of the good, and as it does so, it asserts that at no time shall the condition of man be considered final, that possibilities are before him in the future as far beyond his reach as would have seemed his progress of the present beyond the imagination of the man of ten thousand years ago, and it bids him "go on," and learn that a "thus far" exists not for him of any human authority, whether in social progress, or religion, or science.

Above all, spiritualism in its highest sense, and as preached and lived out by its truest representatives, means a gradual but sweeping reform in the relations of men and women. And here the revelation of the present takes its place as it must and ought, above and beyond any-

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thing yet given to man by prophet, apostle, poet, or philosopher, whether these have been inspired, or whether they have not, whether they have taught in the name of religion, or of philosophy, or of science ; and it urges upon us this sublime reform in behalf of the highest religion, the highest philosophy, the highest science, and in the name of that beautiful Christianity which notwithstanding church, chapel, and orthodoxy, will yet rule the world. Other reforms have been external : this is internal, and no material progress, let it be what it may, can ever accomplish what is in the power of this. The voice of truth now speaking to us shows that man and woman are immortal souls ; that the masculine and feminine principles of being have existed from the eternity of the past, and shall exist throughout the eternity of the future ; that God Himself comprehends these inseparable powers, which are co-extensive with the universe, for ever joined together, and which reach from the Creator to the atom. It uplifts woman to spiritual equality with man, and gives her perfect freedom : it would destroy for ever the chains of a barbaric age which church and state still unite to hold around her ; it would make every marriage a sacrament in deed, in which woman, the mother, should be free, because love has hallowed it and uplifted it to the plane of the divine.

So-called Christians boast of the position woman holds to-day because she who was thrust out from the temple and the mosque was permitted to learn in the Primitive Church. But there has been no slavery in the whole world like the slavery of woman to man, and wherever you look in these so-called Christian countries, there you will find still the

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woman-slave. What makes that army of doomed women,* outraged more even by vile laws than their own terrible lives, possible in every city, in every town in our land, and brings down our Christian morality to the level of heathendom, or the polygamy of the East? What makes this hideous abomination which morally taints all society a "necessity" of "Christian" men? The inharmonious marriages everywhere contracted even in the most civilised of nations. "Marriage," said William Fletcher in one of his trance-addresses, "the fulfilment of the very highest of all claims, stands to-day desecrated in the sight of heaven! You read 'what God has joined together let no man put asunder.' And there is another law, its correlative, 'what God has put asunder, let no man join together.' What is your earthly marriage? It is as a rule, a commercial arrangement. Position, name, property, and reputation are bought and sold in the public mart; and the great underlying law of love is the least understood and the least obeyed. . . . In that other world because there has been no love, no sympathy, between the two in life on earth, they will be as wide apart in fact as they now are in feeling." The earthly marriage perishes with earth.

Why are these marriages made? They are the inevitable result of the legal subjection of one-half of the human race

* At least 50,000 *known* "unfortunates" exist in England alone, some of them very young, some entrapped into vice—the tale of traffic in Brussels does not stand alone—some forced into it by poverty. In certain districts they are under police-surveillance, and are liable, on a minimum of evidence, to treatment utterly demoralising to all concerned in it. A few instances of suicide have occurred in the case of innocent girls victimised by these laws.

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to the other. It has been truly said, "Even in the most enlightened portions of the globe, the expressed opinion is 'woman was made for man.'" Women are daily taught this subjection to man in the name of religion, and because a great and good man once sat down and penned some letters, with varying degrees of inspiration in them, to people who have passed away from our world nearly two thousand years ago, and uttered in them more or less freely his ideas on womanhood, which his age forbade him to truly comprehend, and which it was not his mission to elucidate,—they, who have no free lives of their own are daily sacrificed in those marriages in which love, honour, and reverence for the wife have no place, and parentage, instead of being a blessing, becomes a curse. Thus it is that the vicious, the insane, the inebriate and diseased, the unwelcome children of unwilling mothers, do not cease to be born, and the "blind guides" of men talk of one "Satan" as the origin of evil, and maintain this folly of follies in the face of all that true science, and true religion, and the facts of daily life are ever teaching them. Woman, the most wronged of God's creatures, the being whose wifehood and motherhood are so constantly desecrated at one and the same time that they are made the grounds for refusing to her human rights, as she has been man's servant in the past, is also his servant in marriage in the so-called Christian countries of to-day. Spiritual inferiority and subjection are taught her at the altar; to her—the soul of the world—however crushed, and in the face of the mission of that world, which is to bring forth spirit and spiritual things; and as she leaves it she holds the same position as did once

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the negro slave; she possesses no property;* she possesses not herself; the children that will be hers may be torn from her, and her husband may betray her as men daily betray their wives without possibility of real redress; he may imprison her, insult her, degrade her, and the law which is so strong for the strong has no protection for the weak. Her life may be fairly happy, just tolerable, or unendurable,—she may become an average wife, or she may be the worst of slaves; it is in the hands of the husband whom church and state have united to place in the position of her owner, and her fate depends on his nature, opinions, generosity, or caprice. It is a terrible fact that "those who govern states and nations, are profoundly ignorant of the interior attractions which are natural to the character of woman, and of the sublime influence her spiritual organisation qualifies her to exert upon the race." So writes an inspired writer of the present, who is a spiritualist in something more than name. With many struggles she has succeeded in obtaining some education, and the right to minister in sickness to the needs of her own sex; but even a vote is denied her, and all the larger avenues of life and thought are steadily closed.† To

* Reform in the question of property has at last taken place in the passing of the Married Women's Property Bill of 1882.

† In 1871, in the discussion on woman suffrage in the House of Commons, one of the members quoted the "curse" in Genesis as a divine decree for her eternal subjection, and "woman's punishment" was *cheered!* And in the present year a like-minded M.P. vehemently opposed the idea of a married woman possessing her own property, quoting the same text as "the law of God." Such are the effects of early theological training. If, as Gladstone has recently declared, "the very first and highest of all the tests to be applied to

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be a woman is, as yet, hardly to occupy the status of a human being. Is this the relation between man and woman intended by God? Is this the ideal marriage? Is this the harmonious relation between the sexes which makes man the protector and inspirer of woman, and woman the perfect and responsive wife of man? No. And if Spiritualism teaches one thing more than another it teaches the absolute need of spirituality; that religion must be pure, and must be lived out; that the "serpent" of animalism must be crushed, no matter in what time-honoured institutions it seeks to rear its head; and that the best, the wisest, in fact, the *only* reform which can save the world is to bestow upon woman perfect freedom, and teach men and women that to marry for any other motive than the noblest affection, and the sacred affinity which makes bodies, spirits, and above all, the *souls* of the twain,—*one*, is a sin in the sight of heaven which brings an avenging train of evils on our race. No ceremony, no law, can make it other than this. The superstition upheld by some of the clergy that the divorce which frees a man or woman from an unfaithful or cruel companion, is a sin, shews how utterly blind they are to the truth. No rites on earth can unite persons who are apart, and whose continual union

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a national church is its tendency to promote in its ministers and members the formation of sound moral judgment upon the weightier matters of the law,—*justice*, *mercy*, *and liberty*,"—what shall we say of such tests as these? A theology like this and the brazen facts of our large cities remind one, to a sickening degree, of Louis XV., with his *Parc aux Cerfs*, and his zeal for "orthodoxy."

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may not seldom only degrade body and soul. Through the marriages of the present come the races of the future, and as they are wise or base, good or evil, so also must be the men or women to come. This perfect marriage, rare as it may be, is no dream. It is based on a coming science. Since vital organisms are a higher expression of force than non-intelligent forms of matter, the principles which will furnish the key to real knowledge must be sought for in that which is connected with creative life, and above all in the creative life of man. He is the epitome of the world, and force in him has become spiritualised. Brief as is his earthly life, it is intense and concentrated, and he possesses the elements of a concentrated soul-force resident in the inner man which are capable of producing an enormous development of the race. It can be employed only through the law of harmony, and it can be attained in the first instance, and in its highest degree, only by human beings who have reached the last stages of earthly existence, and are as spirits materialised in earthly forms. In the splendour of this truth, celibacy is an impossibility, if not a sin. The soul-marriage is *life*. It is the most creative, and therefore the most divine condition, one in which the very essence of life and thought is employed through the interior organisation to spiritualise, vitalise, inspire, and strengthen the two thus united, and to produce children of a higher and more spiritual type. Compared with the physical marriage, the state of celibacy may have had some scanty merits; contrasted with the divine union it is an inferior condition, in which the soul is deprived of the means of attaining its

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highest development, and its "black veils" and "cowls" are true symbols of its darkness. This union alone is true purity; it alone is a power for the highest welfare of man; it alone places woman by the side of man as a teacher, because she shares his highest inspirations; it alone can carry on and enlarge the course of real progress. Its possibility is produced by the opening psychic faculties and instincts, the clear vision, the spiritual attraction of man and woman; its proof is in the result of the pure inspiration which can alone arise from the very highest and innermost harmony of soul and spirit. It is the antagonist of those material conditions which make death, disease, and corruption possible, and it is the crowning work of the great principles involved in true spiritualism and spiritual life. The true work of Christ was, and is, spiritual; the true apostolic succession, spiritual; the true church, spiritual; the true morality, spiritual; and beyond all, is the true marriage, spiritual. This marriage of pure love, in which selfishness has no part, and in which all that is most noble, and holy, and highest in their natures, have drawn two souls for ever together in an innermost oneness, is the beautiful power which shall bring angels among us, and restore the mythical lost Eden to man. No more shall he then be "born of the flesh," and the heir of sin, but of the spirit, the divine, of God. Child shall he be of immortality, and the world's long promise and prophecy shall be at last fulfilled!

I close with the contemplation of this godlike reform. It means the Christ-reign. To the materialist it may be Utopian. I care not. One day he will recognise the truths to which such inadequate expression has been given in these

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pages, and he, like the earnest spiritualist of the present, will know that man even now is but the germ of what he may become, and that the psychic, or spiritual man, in whom the soul-power is fully developed, will accomplish things of which we cannot even dream. One has already given himself—one perfect life has already been lived for the human race. Has that life "taken away the sin of the world"? Not yet. *Will it?* Yes—for he is "the way, the truth, and the life"—the way by which men go to the Father, the truth pointing out the world's design, and the immortal life which is to be shared at last by all men. This is the work of Christ, and he, son of the Spirit and the pure and faithful Mary, is the great emancipator of woman, and the bruiser of the "serpent's head" of evil. A fragment remains in the letter of Clement, a follower of Peter and contemporary of Paul, having, as Irenæus says, "seen the apostles and conversed with them," in which the inspired Nazarene is said to have replied to one who asked "when his kingdom should come," "When two shall be one, and that which is without as that which is within, and the male with the female neither male nor female." A truth so far beyond its time fell uncomprehended on the ears of those around him; and the reply was never understood. It was doubtless uttered by him whose mission could alone be fully realised in a coming age, and is an echo of that great life caught up and borne along the mists of centuries, until its meaning should become manifest in the light of a returning dawn.

The noble destiny of the race lies in the direction of the perfect development of mind, soul, spirit; strength of the

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spirit; beauty of the body; purity of the soul; and the right relations of men and women—"equal powers"—will solve the problems of the ages, and make, not one man, like John William Fletcher, who suffers for his holy gift, a phenomenon among his kind, but all humanity, and in the near future—*a race of seers.*



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1881.



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"Speak, history! who are life's victors? Unroll thy long annals and say,
Are they those whom the world called the victors, who won the success of a day?
The martyrs, or Nero? The Spartans, who fell at Thermopylæ's tryst?
Or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges, or Socrates? Pilate, or Christ?'"

"Unheralded and unheeded
God's revelations come;
His prophets before their scorners
Stand resolute, yet dumb;
But a thousand years of silence,
And the world falls to adore,
And kiss the feet of the martyrs
They crucified before!"

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## CHAPTER XV.

### "AD LEONES!"

NEARLY two thousand years ago there prevailed throughout the whole of the East a belief that some chosen one, some messenger of heaven, should appear in the sacred land of Judæa, who should conquer the world. Prophets had long foretold it, the people cherished it as a part of their religion, astrologers read it in the very stars. Even the seers of other nations, like Zoroaster, prophesied the advent of one Oshandervega, the Man of the World, who should accomplish something for mankind such as it had never witnessed before.

The long-expected period arrived at last, heralded by a threefold conjunction of two great planets,—a period of dead sacerdotalism, of materialism, and a dying faith,—and with it appeared one individual in a humble position in life in the village of Nazareth, who, after some thirty years of obscurity and silence, suddenly came among the people as an inspired teacher. For three years, this man, surrounded by a little band of followers, went forth from city to city, and village to village, speaking of a God of love, condemning the ritualism of the Jewish church, healing the sick by wonderful magnetic power, living a life of perfect purity, yet ignoring, with a daring born of supreme moral greatness, conventional modes of thought and action, and finally, boldly proclaiming himself to be this long-expected Christ.

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On the mountain-tops and in the desert he prayed and sought for strength and overcame human temptations; in the little hamlet of Bethany he rested among almost the only friends he had; amid the people, he went forth almost like a spirit, eagerly thronged by the wonder-seekers, ignored by the intellectual Romans, held in contempt by the priests, and believed in fully by perhaps not one being in the world. His followers saw in him the Messiah,—one who was to reign as an acknowledged prince, and they with him as chosen ones, and when this peerless Man, royal only in his spiritual nature and the unearthly realm of *soul* which he was to conquer, uttered the majestic words that "his kingdom was not of this world," and that for him victory could only arise out of death,—they shrank back, and held themselves almost as those who had been misled or deceived. Among those most closely connected with him was one Judas, who had been attracted to his work by earthly and selfish objects, and who on the failure of these, and wholly unable to comprehend the pure and sublime life to which he had been linked, fell under the influences of the slander and opposition which surrounded it, and which beheld in him who loved humanity best, and most of all pitied degraded and suffering humanity,—the "wine-bibber," the rash scorner of time-honoured customs, the intimate of women of evil repute, and the "friend of sinners."

The end came. Inspired with a firm belief in his divine mission, this man, wearied with mobs, and execrations, and conflict with every form of scepticism, arose once more with an unearthly courage, and publicly entered the haughty city which had witnessed the martyrdom of so many of Israel's seers. In a few hours

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he was betrayed by this same Judas, the one who had eaten with him and kissed him, was arrested, and, forsaken by all his friends, arraigned as a pestilent impostor, greedy of earthly honours, before the indifferent and contemptuous Roman governor, and a little later he stood at last as a convicted criminal before the incensed high-priest. Perjury did its work; the half-told, or misunderstood truths, and lies of the false witnesses were only too eagerly received; the people who once thronged to see and hear were careless or even openly hostile; the authorities were determined to suppress what threatened the interests of religion, morality, and order, and in a little while a trembling convict was led forth, and for the sole crime of speaking truth, acting in fearless purity, and being faithful to the grandest impulse of his life, executed outside the city walls by a lingering death of torture, between two thieves.

So, nearly two thousand years ago, passed away the Light of Palestine. And so, also, through this one infamous betrayal, this mock trial, this crucifixion, was the great object attained and the great truth born, of—*Immortality*. The brief three-and-thirty years had done their work. They failed to kill this Christ, to crush the message written on his brow, and in his nature,—he overcame the world, he broke the bonds of matter, and stood among his amazed friends, only a few hours after the apparent death-blow to all their hopes, a resurrection and a prophecy, and as one who had won his way to a height which is even yet unrecognised by the human race. This it was which called forth Paul to face stripes, shipwrecks and imprisonments, to proclaim aloud that the crucified criminal

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of Judæa was its long-expected "Messiah," and this is what has made the tragedy of Jerusalem the hope of millions who worship Christ as God, and who had they seen him when he was on earth would have only joined in the cruel cry of "Away with him! Crucify him!"

Has this crime of slaying God's messengers, of seeking to crush truth by force, never been repeated since then? Alas! it has been repeated throughout the ages, and there has never been one soul strong enough to give new light to the people who has not followed in the Master's footsteps, and suffered a crucifixion of the inner or outer life such as that soul alone knows. The truth-speaker is the social outcast, the blasphemer,—mad, vile, an impostor, an evil-doer, a thief, a hated and a hunted man. This century is no less guilty than the centuries which saw Bruno perishing in agony at the stake for realising a higher view of nature, or Servetus for attaining to a higher view of God. It is a century which is full of the triumph of physical science, of invention, of material progress, of eager utilitarian pursuits, and it hates the demonstration of the *soul*, which all these things really are. The mind alone discovers and invents; indirect spiritual power is the growing motive-power of our earth; direct spiritual power will be man's conquest of his planet. To-day the telephone transmits; to-morrow the spirit leaves the body and speaks. The proofs of this direct spiritual agency are in the hands of one hated sect alone,—the spiritualists, and for these even in the present age, men have only two words, and they are—fool, or impostor. The medium, the man who can hear a voice others cannot, who can see a vision to which others are blind, must be persecuted, if possible, prosecuted, and sent to prison among drunkards,

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thieves, and the lowest criminals. There has been a parallel to-day too marked to be forgotten, when the hour of recognition comes, to the sacred story with which this chapter has been prefaced.

The year 1881 has long been looked upon as one in which some event would occur of more than common mark. That year saw, as in the time of Christ, the commencement of the perehelia of certain of the planets, and it was also the close of thirty-three years of those demonstrations of human immortality known as modern spiritualism. In 1848, which has been truly called "the year of revolutions," when all the "kingdoms of the earth" seemed "shaken," that great and significant movement began, and the year 1881 saw events physical and moral which had a voice for those who could read their signs. It witnessed earthquakes,* the fall of two crowned heads, the revision (a death-blow to "verbal inspiration") of what is called the New Testament, the public discussion of spiritual manifestations at an ecclesiastical congress, and those revolutionary disturbances which are unquestionably connected with occult planetary influences of which ordinary science realises next-to-nothing. In the Great Pyramid, an astronomical, astrological and mathematical structure embodying religious and scientific truths known to the initiated of the past, and pointing to human spiritual unfoldment as no other building has ever done, the signs were in this century discovered by those who know nothing

* Dating from the earth-disturbances which began in November, 1880, to the close of the following year, 244 earthquakes are stated to have taken place, those of Chios and Ischia being very disastrous.

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of its great inspirer, of the laws which link the universe together, and of the possibility of foreseeing the entire development of our earth from the era of the igneous rock to the angelic age of man. Apparently it was constructed to perpetuate the memory of an Egyptian king. In reality it represented a temple; its chambers typified the mysterious stages attained by the ancient hierophant, culminating in the victory of the spirit, and therefore in a prophetic sense to the struggles of our race according to fixed laws in reaching its final conquest over matter. It is a great symbol of immortality; a prophecy of the work of Christ in the past, and of the coming spiritual era of man. It pointed to the planetary epoch of 1881. Many expected what they called the "close of the Christian dispensation"; they saw

"the mystic numbers were fulfilled";

others foretold the appearance of some remarkable man, while the majority alluded to the ancient prophecies with a smile and went their way, indifferent as to whatever might be the world's loss or gain.

The Easter of that year was marked by a great planetary conjunction similar to that threefold one of the past, which in connection with the position of the moon formed in the sky, as was observed at the time, the singular and almost dread sign of the cross. And at that period an event occurred as unmarked as was the crucifixion of the past, save for the public indignation which was vented on one lonely human being, a medium, born in the birth-year of her cause, and who stood in the dock at the Old Bailey, in London, on trial, because she was a spiritualist, and

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could therefore be accused of a "false pretence." This woman was Susan Willis Fletcher, who came three thousand miles across the Atlantic to face Bow Street, the Central Criminal Court, conviction, public condemnation, and an English prison, to vindicate the truth. And she, also, was innocent and heroic as any of the martyrs who had gone before her.

Once more there was the betrayal by those who should have been her truest supporters in the great cause of the truth; there were the perjury, the half-told truths, the perversions of harmless facts, the evil reports, the desertion of friends, the public prejudice, the insults alike from press, from counsel, and from judge, and the cruel and unmerited conviction on the sole testimony of a woman whose word was accepted without question upon every point. Foretold as it has been in these pages, it will strike the reader that all this was part of a long-arranged design, that the Judas-spirit was called upon as before to perform its part, but the responsibility of all who were concerned in that prosecution is none the less. The accused one was defenceless, helpless, and unheard; the mouth of her chief witness, a man of position, good character, and integrity, was, by a plausible legal technicality, closed. She returned from America in the close of 1880 fully warned that she would be arrested, and was hunted down by detectives, who even came on board the steamer to prevent all chance of her reaching London in freedom. She had been ill on the voyage, ill before she left Boston, and she was taken, ill and suffering, to Clerkenwell, after the first astounding charge had been brought against her at the Bow Street police-court, for one week. There I saw her, kneeling at the

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little grating in the door of her cell, with the tears rolling down her cheeks, and I said: "Would it not have been better if you had remained in Boston?" and even there she had the faith and courage to answer: "No; it is *best as it is*." Her sole crime was sheltering a woman who appealed to her for refuge and protection, and reluctantly consenting to take charge of her property as long as, and no longer than, she desired it, holding herself with her husband responsible for the expenses of the inmate of their home. At one word the matter could have been rearranged in peace, but it was never done, and although all this had no connection whatever with spiritual communications from first to last, Susan Fletcher was a spiritualist and a medium, and this is in English law, a false pretence and a crime. She was in the power of her enemies. I need not recount the facts. They are known to many whose sympathy and indignation have been aroused by the knowledge that a great wrong has been perpetrated,—a *persecution*,—one which is in truth disgraceful to England and her legislature.

What had William and Susan Fletcher been doing during their residence in London? Simply testifying to the truth. William Fletcher, a man of singularly pure life and character, appealed to the people from week to week for a higher Christianity, for less of external and more of spiritual religion, and the rest of his time was occupied in giving those proofs of spirit-existence while in trance which were most likely to bring conviction to those who came to him. Religious reform and man's immortality!—methinks he also did no more and no worse than one who walked of old upon the shores of Galilee!

Susan Fletcher was active alike in charitable and social

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work, sustained her husband, cheerfully welcomed all classes of persons, rich and poor, sinners and sinned against, to her home, and lived out the theory which of all others most requires it—viz., that man and woman can be closest friends and yet be pure, and that all true love and sympathy which human beings can give and receive are life-giving and ennobling if maintained upon their highest level. On social subjects she had a reformer's spirit—in fact, so truly belonging to the future that she could hardly hope to be recognised as one of the rarest women of our time—one, indeed,

> "within the measure of whose breast
> Dwells the human love with God-love,—
> Who has found life's truest rest;"

one who lived above and beyond all thought of sex as it is understood by ordinary men and women, whose soul embraced the earth, was wide as humanity, and yet soared towards infinitude. But the world has so long lived in hypocrisy that honesty and purity and freedom outrage it; it loves its dark corners, its silent quagmires, its voiceless evils which can bear no light, least of all the light of a pure presence—too well. Evil reports undermined the beautiful work of which the Fletchers were the instruments before they left England. It was said they were persons of no reputation, false to their principles, associates, in truth, of "publicans and sinners." To both of them, indeed, a Magdalen was a woman still; a man of selfish and worldly impulses a being who could be touched to a higher life; they fearlessly pursued their way, and their slanderers, in these respects, leagues below them, pursued theirs.

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I can hardly convey Mrs. Fletcher's character better than in words describing a man "who," says the writer, "had the ideal lion nature in him,—all the dignity and gentleness, the sudden flash of anger, the forgiveness, the absence of all rancour, malice, and uncharitableness. He was the most loving, the least hating man. Unfortunately his trust in men—and women—transcended all discretion." Of her this is remarkably true. She feelingly said, in the year which saw her suffering commence, "I would rather trust and be deceived than suspect without cause," and the courage and independence of her nature made her a mark for criticism from the first. She was the embodiment of *spiritual liberty*, a liberty which judges of things not as they appear, but as they really are. If there were no real harm in an action, Mrs. Fletcher would do it, no matter what people might say; if she considered anything wrong, however right in the eyes of others, she would leave it undone with the same indifference to the general verdict. She was one of the very few who really own their own souls, and bow to neither man nor woman, and this the world never forgives. For a medium to claim such a position, was an offence to many which amounted to a crime. Yet this daring attitude,—with its inevitable result,—is what is required to give real vitality to a great cause, and workers who bend to floating opinion in the supposed interests of a truth or a principle, create neither opposition against it, nor belief in its reality. They are trampled upon by mere indifference, and indifference is the atmosphere of death. The little foibles which may be discerned in every great character which is known to history, may have attached themselves no less to her, but only those who dwell upon

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the level of trifles could be blind to the real greatness and pure freedom of the nature which makes her a representative woman in the cause of human progress.

It may be true that such souls make their own opposition; they disregard prejudice, and take their stand on untried principle; they outrage timid susceptibilities and orthodoxies of all kinds, and are inspired with the spirit of truth, as yet unlinked to the general experience, unadorned with the home-like growths and the associations of time; however pure their feelings, their lives, their souls, they are the evil-doers and the slandered of their day, just as they are the prophets and the pillars of the future. God and nature beat strongly in them; they rend asunder the immoral conventionalities of their fellows, bring heaven nearer to the earth, and conscious of their mission, willingly pass through the inevitable hell themselves. Man wanders so far from pure truth, its rays so blind him, he loves his ruins hallowed by antiquity so well, that he strikes the arm stretched out to save. Yes; they create their own opposition, because men see trifles more readily than great realities. The ears plucked in the cornfield on the Sabbath-day is the evil deed whispered from one to another; the great triumphant inspirations breathing a higher stage of life in thought and action, are forgotten, the idea of "malefactor" becomes plausible,—crucifixion possible, even laudable; the tide of hatred surges up,—the deed that never can be atoned for, "for they know not what they do," is committed; the unknown messenger passes away, and his immortal cause remains to vindicate his fearless life, his mission, the truth that never can be crushed. Such suffer, must always suffer, by the law of their lives. Yet they



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embody a new age, and its highest impulses come through them, and them alone.

Moreover, a medium who, like William Fletcher, dared to keep a respectable roof over his head by his own unaided exertions, to mix in social life, to dress and live like a gentleman, and to hold his own as a man, who did not, and was not meant to dwell in a corner and rail at everybody else, and who would brook neither patronage nor insult from either spiritualist or sceptic, was of course a being whom the "true spiritual worker" should piously shun. Such a life alone—to those who had not attained it—was hopelessly wrong. When the time came for him to take the only period of rest he had had for three years, the enemy who had crept into their home found many all too ready for their betrayal, and the first sounds of the calumnies in the American newspapers, and of the Boston police-court, were greeted with triumph as the long-expected fall of the Fletchers.

In England there were, to their eternal disgrace, those who were only too eager to carry on the war and crush them; their home was ransacked in their absence, their letters removed, and a warrant of arrest taken out to persecute them afresh. Malice and love of revenge on the part of some, and a lamentable want of courage on the part of others, combined to betray them and their cause alike to the public prejudice and the courts of mis-called justice which are its instruments, and they were dared to return. To drag the Fletchers in the dust was worth the price of the truth of spiritualism, and it was eagerly paid.

They were, indeed, called upon, as had been foretold seven years before, to sacrifice every earthly possession for

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the sake of principle, and inspired alike with a consciousness of her innocence, and of the great reality which has literally forced itself upon the consciousness of our busy and unwilling age, Susan Fletcher, who has already told the story of her life too fully to render it necessary for me to revert to its facts, dared to face the utmost that could be done to destroy reputation, home, happiness, even life itself, and in the thirty-third year of modern spiritualism lifted it in the hour of its crisis to its right place, as a cause which, however unrecognised, has its heroes and its heroines and its martyrs, no less than the early Christianity, in like manner "everywhere spoken against," of the past.

This imprisonment of a medium in the world's great modern Babylon, full of all things which appeal to the senses and the pleasure of an hour, and dead to the inner life of man—was the designed event of the year 1881.



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## CHAPTER XVI.

### ALONE IN AMERICA.

"They are the hunted birds,
Of pierced and bleeding breast."

BEFORE the storm which had so long been silently gathering burst upon the Fletchers, William Fletcher was purposely removed from London, the place where it was destined to culminate. A man, who in truth lived in two worlds at once, and who possessed the extreme sensitiveness arising from the strain of living under spiritual conditions far in advance of the present age, he would at once have sunk under the terrible burden of a public trial, and would have received almost before the prison-doors had opened, a sentence of death. From this the spirit-world determined, notwithstanding his own eager and reckless impulses, to protect him, while he was permitted to face alone an amount of mental anguish and open cruelty and injustice, before which the strongest spirit might well quail.

The spirit Winona had indeed been allowed to warn him long before, but it had seemed at the time needless and almost heartless to act upon her words with regard to one who appeared sent to bless and aid them after a long struggle, and whom they had hoped to make happy in return. Not until the blow had been struck did he realise her faithfulness, and then it was that he wrote from Boston: "Oh, that I had trusted my dear Winona more!—then all would have been well. I expect a

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long, hard fight before I am able to place myself right before the world."

Ill in body, sick at heart, and often well-nigh fainting under the heavy weight of his cross, he went on with his work of lecturing and describing the spirits he saw with a courage which nothing seemed to conquer. On the departure of his wife, whom he loved less with the special devotion of man for woman, than the enthusiastic worship of a devotee for a saint who had been the guardian of his life and the upholder of his work, he at once bravely appeared before the people at all risks, and quietly faced all that press, and popular slander, and the brutal malice of many of his co-workers in the cause could do against him. Even his clairvoyance was at times a cruel gift. On the day of the arrival of the steamer which bore her to England he saw in a vision her arrest, and read the following day the cable which confirmed it in the Boston papers.

All through the winter of 1880 and 1881 he lectured in Philadelphia, Lowell, Portland, and many other places, in each of them giving descriptions of visions which have been rightly described as "unparalleled in the history of psychological or clairvoyant experiences." At the very time of his wife's trial he addressed an audience of 3,000 persons at a great anniversary of spiritualism in the Boston Music Hall, and that no law on earth, no opposition, no wretchedness will ever subdue the spirit of a true medium can be proved from his own words in a private letter which I have in my possession, and in which he wrote, "I have no more tears to shed. I lose myself in work, unremitting labour—labour that takes all the strength I am possessed

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of, and leaves me at night tired and worn out, and yet firm of purpose."

A few began to recognise the earnest spirit of the man, and one, himself a sufferer in the anti-slavery cause, Dr. J. Murray Spear, of Philadelphia, lifted up his voice in his behalf with a clearness of perception and a nobility of feeling which make his words deserve to be permanently recorded. "Being," he said, "one of the first mediums developed in America, and now probably the oldest, I have seen and studied mediumship in all its multifarious forms, and have settled opinions respecting the powers and uses of this class of persons. Some of them have sailed on smooth seas and been honoured, while others, quite as faithful to their convictions, have been despised and rejected because used in ways that violated popular standards of society, morals and religion. Socially ostracised, or neglected by those who could but did not aid them, some good mediums, becoming discouraged, have been compelled to seek other avocations and retire to private life. Others have nobly braved the storms of persecution and become stronger and more earnest workers. Among the last-named is to be found John William Fletcher. While speaking in Philadelphia during the months of March and May, I have enjoyed frequent and favourable opportunities of hearing and observing him in public and private, and have read attentively what the newspapers of England and America have said of him, and have the high satisfaction of believing him so far removed from the mean motives and low practices ascribed to him, as scarcely to be able to comprehend the imputations made upon his character. He has uncomplainingly and manfully gone forward in the work

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which called him hither, commanding larger and more appreciative audiences from week to week, making no reference in public and scarcely in private to the heavy afflictions resting upon him, or to the cruel and malicious attacks of persons both inside and outside the ranks of spiritualism. Sustained by a rectitude of purpose, he has become a more able religious and spiritual teacher. Young, pleasing in manners and person, with a strong, clear, mellow and suasive voice, of a devotional and religious nature, extemporising with grace and ease, he treats his subjects with a beauty, candour, and force rarely excelled by any speaker in our ranks, and is, I believe, destined to rise above suspicion, and to reach the heads and hearts of the liberal and intelligent everywhere."

On the news of his wife's conviction, he became very ill with an attack of brain-fever, and was utterly unable for a time to go on with his work. His letter of reply contained these touching words : "Amid the shadows of the dread reality I sit bowed down by a grief whose burden seems almost insupportable. What can I say,—what can I do? The end has come, and that which I *knew* as the final scene of this tragedy has now been enacted. The powers of hell have for a time prevailed, and I need not add that the crown of thorns is piercing me through and through, and I am torn by a thousand pains. Last night I knew the end had come,—I saw Bertie ; I heard her lonely cry like a wail from out the darkness, and I knew that to-day I should hear the worst. . . . Oh ! if she had not gone to England, but it was *decreed of heaven.*"

And here indeed he struck the key-note. Shame could not touch her spirit nor suffering crush it ; she had obeyed

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the decree of heaven, and the result was with God. Susan Fletcher in the prison-dress in which I beheld her was a woman more honoured than a queen in her robe of purple; she wore the insignia which earth has given to her noblest and best.

Every effort for her release was strangely frustrated; renewed investigation was escaped and thrust aside; the arrangements made by William Fletcher for an appeal to the American Government were rendered void by the sudden assassination and final death of the President; the appeal to the English Home Secretary, with its strong evidence from respectable and reliable witnesses, was dealt with as was expected, according to official routine; the press, almost always cowardly and untruthful in its attacks upon spiritualists, maintained, with one local exception,* the subservient silence which is the last wrong inflicted upon the injured; nobody asked for the truth of the matter, none cared about justice. And so the long and weary time went on, until at last the facts came out among some influential people, and a quiet reaction began in both countries.

It gave new life to William Fletcher, who had greatly gained in spiritual strength, and in the spring of 1882 he at last wrote: "I have no regrets. My desire is to live in the hearts of the people, to lighten the weary load of toil and sorrow, and to let in the sunshine of a brighter day, whose clear rays shall dispel the shadows of doubt and despair." That this aspiration was fulfilled far more fully

* The *Packet* of my native town, Falmouth, where spiritualism was unpopular. The fact deserves recognition.

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perhaps than he ever knew, in many lives, can be recognised from reading the records of a few among the hundreds of clairvoyant descriptions which he gave to strangers of their spirit friends, including names, dates, scenes, messages, which struck like arrows into many a sceptical mind, and fell like sunshine upon many a sad and lonely heart. To quote from the numerous instances which lie before me would fill a chapter alone; were all printed with the names of the witnesses, as I deeply regret they cannot be, volumes would be filled of a character to convince any intellect capable of ordinary reasoning. I give one or two out of a large number reported at the time, as serving to show their nature.

"There is," said he, "a lady here" (description given) "who gives her name; she asks for L. T. B., and says he is her husband. A long communication relating to private matters was then given. At the close a gentleman rose and stated the test true in every particular, and said that he was passing the hall, and seeing the announcement came in."

At the close of another lecture he said, after giving a variety of recognised descriptions: "I see a boat leave the dock containing five persons. It returns with one. I see them struggling for life in the water. All, save one, sink. Now the scene changes. The drowned appear in spirit. On each of their heads is a name, two of which I cannot read." (He gave the others.) "With them comes a friend who recently left the earth-form. One of them says, 'This was twenty years ago.' Several rose in the audience and verified the case."

The recorder of this particular vision remarks upon the

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medium's person and aspect as a lecturer, with a keen penetration in strong contrast to the comments which have been made by those to whom his nature will ever remain a sealed book. He adds: "The first glance at Mr. Fletcher's figure, as he enters the room, gives the idea of a spirituelle slenderness, but as he faces the audience this is replaced by the fact of a well-knit, compact, and shapely form, capable of great endurance and susceptible to a high order of influence. All his movements, and especially his gestures, are graceful and very dignified, and all the more effective because it is apparent that they are natural, not studied. His finely-proportioned body is fitly counterparted by a well-developed head, in which the intellectual predominates. The sharply-defined perceptive faculties are crowned by broad, even massive, reflective organs. A careful study of his face, as a whole, explains the readiness with which he grasps any subject presented for consideration, as well as the comprehensive manner in which he handles all of them." In short, the writer simply clearly saw that William Fletcher possessed the physique and intellectual qualities favourable to extraordinary spiritual influence. To be honest-looking, according to the ideas of some inhabitants of the British soil, one should present the appearance of a bull-dog, the mind of a South Sea islander, and the manners of a bear. An intellectual man, above all, a *spiritual* man, is a being they regard with the most intense scepticism and suspicion. There is, indeed, a natural antipathy between a thoroughly physical and a thoroughly spiritual phase of manhood; the representative of the one instinctively dislikes, and of the other, instinctively recoils. The one

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enjoys and lives intensely in the outer life of the present ; the other is a reformer and belongs to the future: the courage of the one is physical; of the other moral: the one wields a rifle or a sword; the other an opposed truth: the one will storm a breach in the heat of a fight ; the other will go through years of mental suffering, felt as only mediums can feel, in silent endurance.

I should state that the remarks quoted above were published in the *Banner of Light* at a time when William Fletcher was under his heaviest cloud, and least likely to obtain any favourable recognition,—in the summer of 1881.

"On Tuesday evening, May 16th," writes a correspondent of *Facts* (published in Boston), "we were present at a social meeting, and Mr. Fletcher, the medium, while giving proofs and descriptions of spirit-presence, said: 'I see a man standing by a bench or table; and spread out before him I see a lot of shoes, or a great many of them; I get the name Russell, Daniel Russell; he comes to someone in the audience; yes, he says he comes to *two* individuals: I get the names Thomas and Phœbe Howland.' (spelling them). 'There are several others with him, one a lady. I think I have seen her before, but am not sure. I get the name of Eliza R.; it is not Russell,—I have it now, it is Richards (the same one that came the week before, T. G. H.). This man says he comes for a purpose, and the influence is so strong I should like to know if it is recognised.' I rose up and said, 'I recognise it. Daniel Russell was the father of my wife, who is present with me. My name is Thomas G. Howland, and my wife's name is Phœbe. Daniel Russell was a shoemaker, and Eliza Richards is his daughter.' Mr.

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Fletcher thanked me for the recognition, and said he was 'impressed that Mr. Russell had been gone a long time; was it so?' I said thirty-four years, but on second thought remembered that he had been gone thirty-seven years. Mr. Fletcher repeated, 'Thirty-four years—why that was four years before I was born, so I could not have taken it from some *newspaper*, as it is said by some persons that facts come to me in that way.' We had never spoken to Mr. Fletcher before, and had never seen him until last week.—THOMAS G. HOWLAND, Providence, R.I."

Enough has been said. I visited America, and among other places went to the Lake Pleasant Camp Meeting in Massachusetts in the autumn of this year, and heard dozens of such visions, described with startling clearness and accuracy, and without any apparent effort beyond a momentary spasm from the strongly-influenced medium, who stood before an audience of two or sometimes three thousand persons. All were invariably recognised, and sometimes with deep emotion. It seemed as if this man, who had stood in the burning light of public criticism, and for whom all subterfuge, had it ever been practicable, was now wholly impossible, was absolutely tearing asunder the veil which separates us from the other world.

His lectures, I observed, were pointed and vigorous, and delivered in a conscious condition, and before their commencement he would recite with great pathos some long and beautiful poem by heart. Often it would contain a reference to some martyrdom of the past with which his very soul would be in sympathy, and on his table I saw one of his favourite books, read through many weary nights and days—Edwin Arnold's exquisite poem of *The Light of Asia*, which

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must have recalled to him as to few besides his life-work and its never-ending sacrifices which none but angels knew. Strength had come to him as well as hair tinged too soon with grey, but as I heard a woman cry with emotion at a message given by her son through his gift of seership, I thought: "This man has not lived in vain; he will never live in vain. Wherever he is there is a power that will awake the blind, and that power is heaven-sent, and those who have driven him from England, my beloved but slumbering country, have done an accursed thing. There is a sleep that ends in death, and the people who ridicule the proofs of the immortal spirit of man which God gave, and which is the one great hope of our suffering race, are very near it."

Is it not a disgrace, a shameful wrong, and a barbarism worthy of the Middle Ages, that, to use his own words, nothing is done "to raise the honest medium from the position of a *vagrant and a criminal* to that of a man and a teacher"? Is it not a sin that the seers of our day should be at the mercy of any man or any woman who is a vulgar bigot, who owes them a common grudge, who chooses to seek a base revenge? But for the power and foresight of the unseen spirits at whom men mock, London would have been stained with the blood of a rarely-gifted and innocent man, and too late it would have been recognised that her police-courts and her prisons were the instruments of crimes committed against society, against decency, against human rights, and against heaven. Apology and atonement are the least that can be offered to these two persecuted ones who came to England at the bidding of one

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whose name is held sacred upon every lip, and who, simply because they were mediums, were, without a hearing, without justice, without humanity, hunted for nearly two years through the world.

The doom of Jerusalem arises before me because she rejected the light which was sent to save, and through which her destruction might have been averted, and by a natural law nothing can prevent the death of spiritual life in that land which spurns the message of the New Era.

Of Susan Willis Fletcher, I will only add that her reward has already been so great in the spiritualisation of being to which she attained in the prison-cell, and that emonstration of the power of the embodied human spirit, given to many living witnesses, through which the spirit-world means, ere long, to prove in many ways and beyond a doubt, the supreme truth of its existence, that I would say to her, if the victory of spirit over matter is the greatest triumph to which the race of man can attain,—then

> " Take comfort, thou hast left behind
> Powers that will work for thee ; air, earth, and skies ;
> There's not a breathing of the common wind
> That will forget thee ; thou hast great allies ;
> Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
> And Love, and man's unconquerable mind ! "

Nor will those powers, powers of ever-developing nature, and therefore of God, and stronger far than death, forget him who has demonstrated to so many the realities of the life beyond the grave, the "clairvoyant," John William Fletcher.

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